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# PATH BREAKS

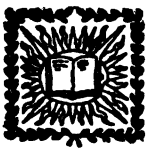
CRÉMIGNY

# WHERE THE PATH BREAKS

By ~~CAPTAIN CHARLES DE CRÉSPIGNY~~

C. N. Williamson

"Only the dark, where the path breaks off
and the milestones end."



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TO THE
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# PART I
# THE AWAKENING

# WHERE THE PATH BREAKS

## CHAPTER I

IN dim twilight a spark of life glittered, glinted like a bit of mica catching the sun, on a vast face of gray cliff above a dead gray sea. There was nothing else in the world but the vastness and the grayness of the cliff and the sea, till the spark felt the faint thrill of warmth which gave to it the knowledge of its own life. "I am alive," the whisper stirred, far down in the depths of consciousness. Next the question came, "What am I?"

At first just that infinitesimal bright glint lived where all the rest was dead, or creation not yet begun. Then slowly the answer followed the question: "I am I. A man. I was a man. I am dead. This

is the twilight between worlds. I must dream back. I must know myself as I was. Later I shall wake and know what I am."

The soul was very still, tired after an all-but-forgotten struggle. It was beginning to remember that it had suffered infinitely. It was patient, with all the patience of eternity before it. There was no hurry. Hurry and turmoil seemed strange and remote, part of some outworn experience. Lying still, it passively waited for the dream to begin. For a moment—or perhaps years—there remained only the gray blankness of the empty world; but the spark of life grew in brightness as a star grows to visibility in the pallor of an evening sky. Then, suddenly, a face flashed into existence—a girl's face.

"I knew her. I loved her," the soul remembered with a thrill, like a shooting ray of the star that was itself. "Where? Who was she? What were we to each other?"

The dream began to take on definiteness. The soul groped back to find its body and its lost place in the world. Not this gray limbo, but the sad and

happy, the glorious and terrible world whence it had somehow passed.

The girl's face faded away for an instant, and the face of a man seemed to be reflected in a blurred mirror. The eyes of the soul looked into the man's eyes and knew them. They were his own. He was that man, or had been. "What a dull dog you are," he heard himself say, as if he had said it long ago, said it often, and the echo had followed him to this twilit place beyond death. He thought the face was rather like a dog's, an ugly mongrel dog's. The girl could not possibly care for him! Yet some one had told him that she did care, and that she would marry him if he asked. "I 'm her mother. I ought to know!" As he heard the woman's voice speaking the words, he saw the face that belonged to the voice: the face of a pretty woman, young looking till the girl came near. . . . The girl had come now! The cream-and-rose tints of her youth made the other face old. This was rather pathetic. He remembered that it had so impressed him more than once. Yet he had never been able to like the mother.

The dream was growing in distinctness. They three—he and the girl and the woman—were in a house. It was a beautiful old house, in the country. Outside it was black and white, with elaborate patterns of oak on plaster. A sheet of water lay so near that the black and white front was reflected in it, like a dream within a dream. The calm water was asleep, and dreaming the house; and some great dark trees and clumps of rhododendrons were dreaming also, which seemed very confusing, and made him doubt whether there were any such soul as his, or whether after all he were only the spirit of the water or the trees, and had never known this girl who was walking with the ugly man. Yet it seemed to be the ugly man's house, and he knew what the man was thinking. They were one and the same, at all events in the dream. And though he was out of doors with the girl, he could see every room in the house as plainly as he could see the lake and the trees and the pink rhododendrons. He seemed to pass through each room, one after another, because the girl was extolling the charm of the house, and

his mind moved here and there following her words, picturing her, white and flower-like against a dark oak paneling, or old brocade, or hanging of faded tapestry.

Yes, it was a beautiful house. He had that to offer her, and money too. There were women who would take him because of what he had to give. And there was something else. What was it? Oh, a title. Not much of a title. He could n't believe she would be influenced by a trifle like that. She was too perfect, too wonderful. A great many men with nobler titles and more money must have asked her to marry them, or they would ask her in future; for she was still very young. So far she had never fallen in love. She had told him so.

"Not seriously in love," she had said, half laughing, and half in earnest. "There was only my cousin. I adored him when I was child. But I have n't seen him since I was sixteen. And now I 'm twenty-one. He was most awfully good looking, and I thought he was a knight and a hero. Perhaps if

he came back from India I should be disappointed in him."

Queer that the groping soul should hold an echo of these chance words about India, though there was none for the name of the cousin, nor even of the girl herself. This made the awakening man wonder again if the girl had existed, or whether she lived only in his dreams. It was a vaguely sweet, vaguely sad dream, which seemed to have ended before it was fairly begun, with a very sorrowful ending which he could n't quite recall yet. He wished to go on dreaming, and to change the end if he could.

The girl and her mother were visiting the ugly man at the old black and white house. He—whoever he was—had to go away. He was begging the girl to stop until he came back. "If I do come back," he added. "Your mother is willing to stay if you are. It would make me happy to think of you in my house, and if anything happens to me . . ."

"Oh, don't speak of such things!" she broke in. "It 's terrible that you must go."

This was very kind of her, because it was not reasonable that she could really care much—such a girl—for such a man, who had never been able to interest her, he felt. But she looked at him, looked up mistily with her dear eyes of smoke-blue. There was some message in them, behind a glaze of tears.

Drowned in those eyes, he heard himself stammering out things he had not thought that he would ever dare to say. "If you could marry me . . . I don't suppose you could . . . but if . . ."

Her answer did not come into the dream. Perhaps she had not answered. But he could see the ugly man holding out his hands, and the girl putting her hands into them. He could see her looking up at him again, and in the beautiful eyes there was that message she wanted him to read. There, at that place, was the end of the dream-picture; it never went further, though he tried over and over to carry it on; the girl looking up, a tall slender shape in white, with the afternoon sun burnishing her hair, and giving to it the color of a copper beech tree under which she stood. He knew that he had thought,

"I shall never forget her as she is now, not even when I 'm dead." He had kept his word. He was dead; hovering on the borderland of the unknown: and he had not forgotten. But just where the dream ended, before he could read the girl's look and hear what she had to say, her mother had come quickly out of the house, with an open book in her hand. That seemed to be the reason why the picture broke.

It seemed afterwards too, though there was no clear vision, that the girl was willing to marry him, just barely willing. Her mother took it for granted that she had said "yes" when he asked her, and the girl let it go as if it were true; though he could not be sure it was what she had meant when she looked up with the strange light in her eyes, and tried to speak. He would have given years of the future he hoped for then, to have been sure, without any doubts.

When he stammered out his questions he had not thought of anything better than an engagement, to end in marriage if he came home safely after the war. . . . The war! . . . Dim remembrance of

hideous suffering suddenly stirred the slow current of his dream. There had been war. That was how it had happened! He had been killed in battle. Or else, none of the dream was true! There had been no such man, no such girl, no such black and white house reflected in a crystal lake. This was a dream of things that had never been. A veil of unreality began to fall between him and the picture he had seen. No, it could n't have been true of his life, of course, because the dream had begun again, and was carrying him on to a wedding. The church in the village . . . (he knew that church well, and the way to it from the big gates and the little gates; the long way and the short cut) . . . The girl, and a man in khaki were standing together . . . the same ugly man, uglier than ever in his soldier clothes, he thought. He heard the words which a clergyman in a white surplice was reading out of the prayer book. "To have and to hold, till death do you part." And he saw himself putting a ring on the girl's finger. She held her left hand out to him—the long, slim hand he used to think must be

like St. Cecilia's, because of the genius of music in its finger tips. He could see no following picture of her alone with him. He saw himself going away, waving good-by: then a train and a boat, and a train again, with a crowd of other men, all soldiers.

He was an officer. (He had left the army before that dream-time, he could not remember why, but it had something to do with money—and with the black and white house: and he had offered himself again for the war.) In the dream he rode a horse along a straight sunlit road, with poplars on either side that gave no shade. There were days of marching in furnace heat. Then came a night of silver moonlight reddened by fire; a village burning. There was a noise as of hell let loose: and since he had been dead he hated noise. It was the one unbearable thing. Hearing noise in his dream, the star which was his soul shattered itself into a thousand sparks, each spark a red-hot nerve of pain. All round him in the crowded dream there was fighting. Smoke stung his eyelids. He breathed it in, and choked. His horse trampled men down. Their

cries were in his ears. Some voice he knew called to him for help. He pulled a man up on his horse; a friend, he thought it was, some one he cared for. Now the horse stopped, reared, and fell. By and by the man whose soul dreamed, struggled to his feet, dazed, but remembering his friend dragged him from under the hurt animal. Helmets glittered in the moonlight. Eyes glinted red in the copper glare. He fought with a sword and kept off men that pressed on him and his friend, trying to kill them both. A stab of pain shot through his hand. A bugle sounded. Men were running away. He thought they were men of the enemy; a stream of helmets going. He heard his own voice shout an order, but before it could be obeyed a din as of mountains rent asunder roared his voice down. His whole being was swallowed up as a raindrop is swallowed in a cataract. A huge round shape rushed towards him, black against moonlight and flame. Then the world burst and tore him in a million fragments. . . .

His soul coming back to knowledge of its contin-

uance held the impression that this rending anguish of death had been long, long ago, thousands of years ago in time: and that he was now or soon would be waking into eternity. The breaking of the dream and the pain he had suffered ought not to seem important. It ought not to matter to a disembodied spirit. Yet it did matter terribly. Most of all did it matter that the girl with the smoke-blue eyes and copper-beech hair had been swept away from him forever. She was somewhere in the world he had left behind. He did not even know her name, or whether indeed she had really been in his life. Henceforth he would have to wander through space and eternity without finding her again.

The man groaned.

"He 's coming round at last!" a woman's voice said.

The voice sounded muffled, and far off. It sounded harsh, too. It was not a sweet voice, and it was not speaking his language. Through the gray dimness which hung over him like a cloud, trickled this impression. He wondered why, if the

language were not his, he should understand what the voice said.

"G-erman," he struggled to say, and succeeded with pain in whispering the word.

Somebody laughed. "He knows he 's in German hands!" chuckled the same voice.

An agony of regret fell upon him like an ice avalanche. He was alive, then, whoever he was, and there had never been a girl with smoke-blue eyes and copper-beech hair! She was only a dream. That must be so, because the words she had said to him were all gone from his mind. He could no longer remember anything about her except her face —and those eyes. Those eyes! His interest in past and present abruptly ceased. He let himself slide away into blank oblivion.

## CHAPTER II

HOURS or years later he waked up with a start, and stared at the light. It was daylight, and he was in an immense room. It seemed big enough for a theater. Perhaps it was a theater. The walls had red panels painted on them, and on each panel one or two cupids danced and threw flowers: repulsive, stout cupids. The ceiling was very far up above his eyes, and there was a dome in the center. From this dome depended a huge crystal chandelier like a bulbous stalactite. There were a great many high windows, with panes here and there opened for ventilation. The windows had no curtains, and the room had no furniture except beds—beds—endless rows of beds, surely hundreds of beds.

He lay in one of these. All were occupied. He could see heads of men whose bodies looked extraor-

dinarily flat. On some of the heads were bandages. Others were shaved, so that they appeared quite bald. They were very pale heads in the bleak, grayish light filtering dimly through the high windows. A number of bunks were hidden by screens. He wished dully that he had this privacy, but his narrow bed had been given no such protection.

A man was slowly walking down an aisle between rows of narrow cots all exactly alike. Beside the man, who had a remarkably large head with a shock of rough, straw-colored hair, was a woman dressed as a nurse. The newly awakened one knew she was a nurse, though she was not dressed in the costume familiar to him in some vague past. There were many in the room wearing the same sort of cap and apron and prim gown that she wore: young women, middle-aged women, old women. They had kind faces, but the watcher saw no beautiful ones. Not that he cared for that, or anything.

He had not been awake long when a big girl came towards him, paused, peered, and went away again. She stopped the nurse who walked with the shock-

headed man, and spoke to her. The woman's cap and the man's tousled hair turned from the direction they had been taking, and approached his bed. They bent over it, and he gazed up stupidly at their faces. The shock-headed man had a beard even lighter than his hair. He smoothed it with a white, strong-looking hand, a capable hand, the hand of the born surgeon. The woman had hard features, but soft eyes, wistful, and pathetic.

"You see, he is getting along finely," she said to her companion. "I think we shall have no more trouble with him now."

The man in bed remembered that he had heard her voice before, and that she had spoken German then, as now. He did not wonder this time why he understood what she said, though the language was not his own. He remembered that he had learned German when he was a boy, and had hated learning it because of the verbs.

"How do you feel?" the surgeon enquired, in English.

The man in bed tried to answer. His voice came

in a weak whisper. This surprised him, and made him ashamed. "Very—well," he heard himself say, as he had seemed to hear himself speak in the dream which was gone now, far away, out of reach.

"Good!" said the surgeon. "Can you tell me your name?"

The sick man thought for a moment, and the question went echoing through his brain as a voice calling one who is absent echoes through a deserted house. Knowledge of his helplessness brought a sense of physical disintegration, as if the marrow of his bones was melting.

"Never mind!" the shock-headed surgeon said, in a quiet, reassuring tone. "It 's all right. You 'll remember by and by, when you 're stronger. Don't worry about yourself. I 've performed an operation on you, which is known as trepanning. That was some days ago. It has been a success. But we will let you rest a while longer before we bother you with questions. The only thing is, the sooner we learn your name the sooner we can take steps to let your people hear that you 're alive. It 's a long

time since you were wounded: eight months. We could n't operate on your head till now. There were too many other things to mend about you! *Somebody* must be anxious. Go to sleep again when you 've had your food, and perhaps the past will all come back to your mind. But if it does n't, don't make an effort. That will do you harm."

The sick man expressed his thanks with the faint ghost of a smile. When the nurse had fed him with warm liquid, which he drank through a tube without lifting his bandaged head from the pillow, he closed his eyes and tried to find his way into the dream again. But the door of the dream was shut. He could see only the face of the girl. She alone remained to him, as if she had lingered and found herself locked out when the dream-door shut. She had no name, and he had none. But that seemed to be of little importance. It was easy to obey the surgeon and not make an effort. The difficult thing would have been to struggle toward any end. He felt that to do so would shatter his brain. And as he was very sure nobody cared what had become of

him, there was no need. Why he was so sure of this, he could not tell. But something inside him, which remembered things *he* had forgotten, was absolutely sure.

How long his lethargy of mind and body lasted, he did not know. Days faded grayly into nights, and nights brightened grayly into days. Neither the surgeon nor the two nurses who had charge of him asked further questions. He took no real interest in anything except the effort to find his way back into the lost dream, which he could never do; and sometimes even the beloved face was blotted out. But at last, the objective began to dominate the subjective in the man. He gave a little thought to his surroundings. He noticed his neighbors who occupied the beds near him, and listened dully when they talked to the nurses. They were all Germans. One day he asked the nurse with the patient eyes, if there were any other Englishmen besides himself in her charge. And as he spoke the word, with confidence which he could not analyze, it sent a faint thrill through his veins, a sense of unity with

something. "Englishmen!" He was an Englishman.

He had to speak in German, for the nurse had no other language. Oddly enough, it seemed easy to make her understand.

"We had four Englishmen with you when you came," she replied. "They are—gone now."

He understood that they were dead, and that she did not like to tell him so. He smiled faintly, but asked no more questions then.

Next, he wanted to know where the hospital was, and how long he had been in it.

"You are in Brussels," the nurse told him. "This used to be a restaurant. All the hospitals were full. You have been here only a few weeks, but we had heard of you, for yours was a wonderful case. Many doctors have talked about it. Just before your operation, you came to us. You were brought to Herr Doctor Schwarz for that. He is a great man for the brain. You were lucky to have him to operate. It was thought you might be an officer, because you spoke both German and French, when

you did n't know what you were saying. A bit of bone pressed on the brain. Your head had been hurt. And you had many other wounds, which another great surgeon had cured, when every one else said you would surely die. That was why they waited so long before operating on your brain. You had suffered so much already. You had to grow strong after what you had gone through, and get over the nerve-shock, which was worst of all."

"Let me see, how long did Dr. Schwarz tell me it was, before they operated?" he asked.

"Eight months," the nurse answered reluctantly, as if she feared to excite him, yet saw no real reason why, now that he was getting well, he might not hear all the truth about himself. Besides, it might help him to remember the past. She knew that Dr. Schwarz was anxious for him to do so now. He had always been an extremely interesting and rather mysterious "case," sent from a distance by a brother surgeon to Schwarz, and specially recommended to his attention. "Eight months," the woman repeated. "I think you were wounded in some bat-

tle early in August. We have the record that came from the first hospital where you were. Now it is the 15th of April."

"Eight months," the man counted dreamily with his fingers. "Why don't they know whether or not I was an officer?"

"It was like this," the nurse explained, with her stolid yet kindly and truthful look; "it was like this: Your cavalry and our cavalry fought. That is the account we have, though it is not very clear. You were getting the better of us, but our artillery came up and our Uhlans were ordered to retreat. When they were safely out of the way, your lancers were shelled. I think they were cut to pieces. Nobody on either side could get at the dead and wounded for days. When they did go to help the living, it was our Germans who went. Most of the English were killed. You and the others who lived (unless a few escaped), were brought to a hospital of ours, in the north of France. Our soldiers would not do such a thing, so it must have been prowling people—thieves—who stripped off your

clothes. One reason why our doctors thought you might be an officer, even before you spoke, was because the little finger of your left hand had been partly cut off. It had been done with a knife. That seemed as if you must have worn a valuable ring, so tight it could n't be got off in a hurry."

"My mother's ring," muttered the man. The words spoke themselves. Again, it was not he who remembered, but something which seemed to be separate and independent, hiding inside him, though not in his brain. It knew all about him, but would not give up the secret. Impishly, it threw out a sop of knowledge now and then, just as it pleased. The nurse tried to encourage this Something to go on, but it would not be coaxed. When she repeated the conversation to Schwarz afterwards, however, he said, "That 's encouraging. Don't press him too much. Let body and brain recover tone. Then we 'll try more suggestions. It 's the most interesting case we 've had. What is it to me that he 's friend or enemy? Nothing. He 's a man. I shall think of a way to set up the right vibrations."

The way he thought of was to commandeer a bundle of English papers which had been passing from hand to hand in Brussels. These papers had been smuggled into the town by a German who had escaped from a concentration camp in England. He was a doctor, and had got into Belgium through Holland. Such newspapers as he had were very old ones, but that did not matter, because the man in whom Schwarz, the surgeon, was interested had lost touch with the world since a day soon after the breaking out of war. He must have been among the first troops sent over from England to France, and rushed straight to the front.

For a few days he had been very silent, asking no questions. He seemed always to be thinking. By Schwarz's orders he was left alone. Then, one morning, he was surprised by the news that he was well enough to sit up. When he had been propped with pillows, the nurse he liked best—the one with the hard features and soft eyes—slipped a roll of dilapidated newspapers under the listless hands that lay on the turned-over sheet.

"English," she said, and saw that his eyes brightened.

. . . . . .

His left hand, with the tell-tale mutilated finger, began painfully to open out the heavy roll. He could not help much with the other hand, for his right arm had been so injured that it had been strapped to his side for weeks, and the muscles had withered. They would recover tone, and the arm its strength, Schwarz prophesied, but he was only just beginning again to use his right hand.

This was the first time he had read anything except the notices posted up on the hospital walls, which forbade loud talking and other offenses. To see the *Illustrated London News* and the *Daily Mail* and the *Chronicle*, dated on days of September, made him feel more than ever that he had died, and come back to earth on sufferance as a ghost. For him there had been no autumn nor winter. The world had ended on a hot night in August. There had been summer, and then blackness. Now it was spring.

September 10th. September 11th. September 13th.

The *Illustrated London News* lay on top. He laid back the cover. There was a battle scene on the first page. It looked vaguely familiar. British lancers and helmeted German Uhlans were fighting furiously together. Apparently it was night. The background was lit by flames from a burning village. It was an impressionist effect, well presented. The man felt very tired and old as he looked at the picture. Pains throbbed through his head and body and limbs, reminding him of each wound now healed. He turned over the page and several others. Near the middle of the paper he opened to one entirely given up to small photographs of officers. "Dead on the Field of Honor," he read. Under each portrait were a few lines of fine print. He began with the left-hand side, at the top. Faces of strangers. Then two he recognized, with a leap of the heart. One had been an acquaintance, one an old friend. Their names rushed back to him, as if spoken by their own voices,

even before he had time to read. Human interests surged round him as he lay, every-day interests of life as he had laid it down. "Dear old Charley Vance. Dead! And Willoughby. . . ."

A photograph in the middle of the page seemed to tear itself from the paper and jump at his eyes. It was larger than the others grouped round it. . . . "Good God!" broke from his lips.

He glanced around, startled. He was afraid that he had screamed the words. But evidently he had not made any sound. No one was noticing him. Most of the men near by, all surgical cases, were resting quietly. Several nurses were talking at a distance, their broad, reliable backs turned his way.

It was his own photograph he was looking at . . . the face of the ugly man he had seen in the lost dream, as in a dim mirror. Underneath was a name. He would *know*, now—his own name, and—the rest. All his blood seemed to pour away from his heart. A queer mist swam before his eyes. He tried to wink it away, but could not, and had to wait till it faded, leaving a slow shower of silver sparks.

"Killed in action, on the night of August 18th, Sir John Denin, 16th baronet, Captain —th Lancers, aged 32. See paragraph on following page."

The man turned the leaf over. There was the paragraph.

"Captain Sir John Richard Stuart Denin, killed in the fatal night fighting near ——, where his regiment was caught by the enemy's artillery fire in a wood, was a well-known figure in the world. It will be remembered that on the death of his uncle, Sir Stuart Denin, from whom the title passed to him, the unentailed estates were left by will to a distant cousin and favorite of the late baronet. Sir John was advised by his friends to contest the will, but refused to do so, saying his uncle had every right to dispose of his property as he chose. This generosity was considered quixotic, but had a romantic reward a few months later when an aunt of the new baronet's mother bequeathed him one of the most beautiful and historic of the ancient black and white houses in Cheshire, Gorston Old Hall, and half a million pounds. On receiving this windfall of for-

tune which was entirely unexpected, it will be recalled that Sir John resigned from the army, he being at the time a first lieutenant in the —th Lancers. Two years later, on the outbreak of the war, he at once offered his services, which were accepted, and he was given a captaincy in his old regiment, leaving for the front with the first of our Expeditionary Force, and he was, unhappily, also among the first to fall. On the day of his departure Sir John was quietly married at his own village church in Gorston, Cheshire, to Miss Barbara Fay of California, U.S.A., who is thus left a widow without having been a wife. Everything he possessed, including Gorston Old Hall, passes by the will of the deceased officer to his widow. As Miss Fay, Lady Denin was considered one of the most beautiful American girls ever presented to their Majesties, she having made her début at an early court in the spring of 1913, or a little over a year before her wedding and widowhood. The mother of Lady Denin, though married to an American professor of Egyptology who died some years ago, has English blood in her veins; and

is a near relative of Captain Trevor d'Arcy of the —th Gurkhas, now on the way to France with his gallant regiment. Captain d'Arcy's photograph taken with his men at the time of the Durbar, appears on the following page, also that of the newly widowed Lady Denin. In the battle where Captain Sir John Denin met his death, he greatly distinguished himself by gallant conduct, and to him would have been due a signal success had not the German artillery rescued the defeated Uhlans and followed up their flight with a withering fire. Sir John succeeded in saving the life of his first lieutenant, the Honble. Eric Mantell, who was one of the few to escape this massacre, and who had the sad privilege of identifying his preserver's mutilated body on the battlefield. Sir Eric had recovered sufficiently from his wounds to be present at the funeral, the remains of the dead hero having after some unavoidable delay been brought to England and buried in Gorston churchyard. Had Sir John lived, it is said that he would have been recommended for the Victoria Cross."

The man who had died and been buried, whose body had been identified by his friend and taken home, fell back on the thin hospital pillow, and closed his eyes. He felt as if he had come to a blank wall, stumbled against it, and fallen. Then, suddenly, he realized that by turning over a page, he could see *her* face—the face of his wife.

## CHAPTER III

HE turned the page, but for a moment it was a blank, blurred surface, as if everything on it had been blocked out by order of the censor. He found himself counting his own heart-beats, and it was only as they slowed down that the page cleared, and the eyes he had seen in the lost dream looked up at him from the paper.

They gave him back himself. A thousand details of the past rushed upon him in a galloping army.

"Lady Denin, widow of Captain Sir John Denin," he read. "She is shown in this photograph in her presentation dress, as Miss Barbara Fay."

Barbara had disliked the photograph. He could see it now, in a silver frame on her mother's writing desk, in the drawing-room of the little furnished house taken for the season in London. He had been shown into that room when he made his first call.

Mrs. Fay had asked him to come, just when he was wondering how to get the invitation. And Mrs. Fay had given him one of those photographs. It occurred to him that she must also have given one to the newspaper. Barbara would not have wished it to be published. But he had thought it beautiful, and he thought it more than ever beautiful now.

His wife—no, his widow! That was what the paper said: "Lady Denin, widow of Captain Sir John Denin." What would she do, what would she say, if she could see the wreck of John Denin, in a German hospital in Belgium, staring hungrily at her picture?

He asked himself this, and answered almost without hesitation. She was so loyal, so fine, that she would not grudge him his life. She would even try, perhaps, to think she was glad that he lived. Yet she could not in her secret heart, be glad. Such gladness would not be natural to human nature. She had been hurried into marrying him, partly because he loved her and was going away to fight, partly because her mother urged it as the best solu-

tion of her difficulties. Now, all things Mrs. Fay had wanted for the girl were hers without the one drawback; the plain, dull fellow who had to be taken with them—the fly in the ointment, the pill in the jam. Barbara had dearly loved the old black and white house. She had said so a dozen times. She had never once said that she loved John Denin. She had only smiled and been kind, and looked at him in a baffling way, with that mysterious message in her eyes which he had been too stupid to read. Mrs. Fay had loved the house too, and the whole place; and it was hard to believe in looking back, that she had not loved the money, and the idea of a title for her beautiful girl.

John Denin, who ought to have died and had not died, asked himself what was now the next best thing to do. Also he asked the eyes in the photograph, but they seemed gently to evade his eyes, just as they had often evaded them in life.

Next on the page to Barbara's picture was the portrait of her cousin, Captain d'Arcy, of whom she had spoken more than once, the "hero and knight" of her

childhood. He looked a handsome enough fellow in his uniform, though hardly of the "hero and knight" type. He was too full-fleshed for that: a big, low-browed, thick-lipped man of thirty-six or seven, who would think a great deal of himself and his own pleasure. Evidently he had changed since the days when he was the ideal hero of a sixteen-year-old girl. Denin, scarred and wrecked, a bit of human driftwood, was dimly shocked at the mean pleasure had in this thought. Barbara—wife or widow—was unlikely to feel her old love rekindle at sight of her cousin, and Denin was glad—glad. Barbara was not a girl to fall in love easily. But, if she believed herself free, she might some day. . . .

A spurt of fire darting up his spine seemed to burn the base of his brain. It struck him almost with horror that the question he had been asking a few minutes ago had answered itself. No matter how undesirable he might be as a husband, he must for Barbara's own sake force the fact of his continued existence upon her.

"As soon as I can control my hand enough to

hold a pencil, I 'll write to her—or her mother. Or perhaps I 'll try to telegraph, if that 's possible from here," he thought. Poor Barbara! Poor Mrs. Fay! It would be a blow to them, and—yes, by Jove, to Frank Denin, his cousin. Poor Frank, too! He had got the Denin estates and the money which ought to have gone with the baronetcy, and then by an extra stroke of luck the title had fallen to him, on top of all the rest. It would be a wrench for him to give it up after more than eight months of enjoyment. Then there was that pretty American girl, Miss VanKortland, to whom poor old Frank had proposed time after time. All his money and the two big places had made no difference to her. She had plenty of money of her own. She had seemed to like Frank Denin, but she was a desperate flirt and had always said that if she ever married out of her own country, it would be a man with a title. It was Kathryn VanKortland who had introduced Sir John Denin to Barbara Fay at a dance, not long after Barbara's presentation. John had felt grateful to Kathryn for that, and indirectly grateful to Frank

because if it had n't been for him he would not have been invited to Miss VanKortland's dance. How strangely, vividly, yet dreamily those days and everything that had happened in them came back to him, while the people whose faces he called up thought of him in his grave! He wondered how it was that Eric Mantell had escaped, and how Eric came to believe that he had identified John Denin's body. He wondered also whether, now that Frank Denin was "Sir Frank," Kathryn VanKortland had changed her mind.

"I wish I could make the title over to Frank," the man in the hospital cot said to himself. "God knows I don't value it for myself, and I don't believe Barbara does. But it can't be. And there 's just one thing to be done."

There seemed to the weary brain of the invalid, however, no great hurry about doing the one thing. Barbara was certainly not grieving for him. There was no one else to care very much except some of the old servants, and he had remembered all of them in his will before going to the front. As for Frank, in

a way it would be a good thing for him if he could secure Kathyrn before the news came bereaving him of the baronetcy. The girl could not leave him if they were married, or even throw him over with decency if they were engaged. Besides, Denin wanted to write the letter himself. He would not trust the task to one of the nurses, and had confided to no one yet the fact that memory of his past had come back. He was only just beginning to use his right hand for a few minutes at a time. It would be a week at the least, before he could write even a short letter without help.

Two days went by, and the surgeon's orders to "let him alone," so that he might "come round of his own accord," were still observed. Nobody questioned the invalid about himself, though the nurses said to each other that he had "begun to think."

On the third day, a wounded British aviator was brought into his ward. The news ran about like wildfire, and Denin soon learned that a fellow countryman of his had arrived. The aviator, it seemed, had been in the act of dropping bombs on some rail-

way bridge which meant the cutting of important communications, when he had been brought down with his monoplane, by German guns. Both his legs were broken, but otherwise he was not seriously hurt.

Denin enquired of a nurse who the man was, and heard that he was Flight Commander Walter Severne.

The sound of that name brought a faint thrill. Denin did not know Walter Severne, but he had met an elder brother of his, who was one of the first and cleverest military airmen of England. It was probable that Walter Severne might have seen John Denin somewhere, or his photograph—if only the photograph in that copy of the *Illustrated London News*, which had labeled him as "dead on the field of honor." If his scars had not changed him past casual recognition, Severne would be likely to know him again, and it occurred to Denin that to be identified in such a way would not be a bad thing. Besides, if the aviator had not been away from England long, he might possibly have news to give of

Barbara—and Frank—and Kathyrn VanKortland.

They were more or less in the same set, in the normal days of peace which seemed so long ago. He asked permission, when he was got up for his hour out of bed, to talk to the wounded Englishman, and was told that he might do so, provided that an English-speaking nurse was near enough to hear everything they said to each other.

Denin's progress along the ward was slow. He had not been an invalid eight months for nothing, and the mending of his splintered bones and torn muscles was hardly short of a miracle, as surgeons and nurses reminded him frequently, with glee. He moved with a crutch, and one foot could not yet be allowed to touch ground, though Schwarz gaily assured him that some fine day he might be as much of a man as ever again, thanks to his enemies' skill and care. Severne had been told that an Englishman who had lost his memory through injuries to the head, and forgotten his own name, was coming to talk to him. Lying flat on his back with both legs in plaster-of-Paris, the aviator looked up expect-

antly; but no light of recognition shone in his eyes when the tall form in hospital pajamas hobbled into his range of vision.

Denin did not know whether to be relieved or disappointed. Certainly he was not surprised, for he had asked for a mirror that morning, and had studied his marred face during a long, grim moment. From temple to jaw on the left side it was scarred with a permanent red scar. A white seam where stitches had been, ran through the right eyebrow. A glancing bit of shrapnel had cleft his square chin precisely in the center, giving a queer effect as of a deep dimple which had not been there before August 18th; and his thick black hair was threaded with gray at both temples.

A chair was given to him, in which to sit by the newcomer's bedside. Severne was very young and, it seemed to Denin in contrast with that new vision of himself, as beautiful as a girl. Warned that the other man had lost his memory, the wounded aviator was pityingly careful not to ask questions. He talked cheerfully about his own adventures, and said

that he had been "at home" on leave only a week ago.

"At home!" Denin echoed. "What was it like —over there?"

"Awfully jolly," said Severne. "Not that they don't care, or are n't thinking about us, every minute, night and day. But you know how our people are. They make the best of things; they have their own kind of humor—and we understand. Fact is, I—went over to get married. I suppose—er—you never knew the Lacy-Wilmots of Devonshire? They 're neighbors of ours. I married the second daughter, Evelyn. I—we had two days together."

"You were lucky," said Denin.

"Think so? Well, we did n't look at it like that. I wrote to her this morning. Hope she 'll get the letter."

"Some fellows had only an hour or two with their brides, I heard," Denin said, almost apologetically.

"That 's true," said Severne. "Jove! There are shoals of war brides, poor girls, and as brave as they make 'em, every one!"

"What about—the war widows?" Denin ventured, stumbling slightly over the words.

"They 're brave too, all right. But I expect there are some broken hearts. Not all, though, by any means. Damn it, no! Lady Denin, for instance. Did you ever hear of her? I mean, did you ever hear of John Denin? *They* had about an hour of being married before he went off with the first lot in August, poor chap."

"What about Denin?"

"Oh, you did n't know him, then? Why should you? I did n't myself, but he belonged to one or two clubs with my brother Bob. I may have seen him myself. Awfully fine chap. Everybody liked him, though he was close as a clam—no talker. Came into a ripping place and piles of oof a few years ago. Not much on looks, though he was an A1 sportsman and athlete. Girls thought him a big catch. I 've heard plenty say so. Well, he married an American girl, a beauty, the day he left for the front, and about a fortnight later she was a widow with everything he had, made over to her. That

was n't much above eight months ago. But the day Evie and I were tied up, the first of last week, Lady Denin married her cousin, d'Arcy of the —th Gurkhas. Quick work—what? No heart-break there!"

As there came no answer, Severne supposed that his visitor felt no interest in this bit of gossip apropos of war widows. He glanced up from his hard, flat pillow at the other man, and saw what he took for a far-away look on the scarred face. To change the subject to one more congenial, the aviator began to chat of things at the front; but almost instantly the English-speaking nurse intervened. The two invalids had talked long enough. Both must rest. They could see each other again next day.

Without any protest, and scarcely saying good-by, Denin dragged himself back to his own part of the ward. "'Nobody home!' The poor fellow looks as if he was n't all there yet." Severne excused the seeming rudeness of the nameless one.

Denin had not had his full hour of freedom from bed, but he declared that he was tired and that his head ached, so he was allowed to lie down. He

turned his face to the wall, and appeared to sleep, but never had he been more vividly awake.

His plan had fallen into ruin with one bewildering crash. The corner-stone had been torn out from the foundation. His duty—or what he had seen as his duty—was changed. After all, Barbara had not been disappointed in her cousin. She had found him her "knight and her hero" as of old. She had loved the man so passionately that she had given herself to him after only eight months of widowhood. If he had heard this thing of a woman other than Barbara, Denin would have been revolted. It could only have looked like an almost defiant admission that there was no love in the first marriage —nothing but interest. He could not, would not, however, think that Barbara's act was a proof of hardness. Lying on his bed, with his face to the blank white wall, he began to make desperate excuses for the girl.

She had married him by special license at three days' notice eight months ago, hurried into a decision by his love, and perhaps the glamour of war's

red light. Her mother, too, had given her no peace until she made up her mind. For the hundredth time he assured himself of that fact. And as for the well-nigh indecent haste of the second wedding; why, after all, was it so much worse than the first?

Her marriage with him, John Denin, had been a marriage only in name. She was left a girl, with no memories of wifehood. No doubt this new giving of herself had been another "war wedding." Trevor d'Arcy in his picture looked like a man who would do his best to seize whatever he wanted. He had of course been going away, perhaps after being wounded and nursed by Barbara. It would be natural, very natural, for her to feel that she would be happier when d'Arcy was at the front, if they belonged to each other. Denin told himself savagely that it would be brutal to blame the girl. She had a right to love and joy, and she should have both, unspoiled. He would be damned sooner than snatch happiness from Barbara, and drag her through the dust of shame, a woman claimed as wife by two men.

"This decides things for me, then, forever and

ever," he thought, a strange quietness settling down upon him, like a cloud in which a man is lost on a mountain-top. "She 's free as light. John Denin died last August in France."

## CHAPTER IV

BUT the man in the German hospital did not die. He could not, unless he put an end to his own life, and to do that had always seemed to Denin an act of cowardice and weakness. He remembered reading as a boy, how Plato said that men were "prisoners of the gods" and had no right to run away from fate. For some reason those words had made a deep imprint upon his mind at the time, and the impression remained. His soul dwelt in his body as a prisoner of the gods, a prisoner on parole.

Life—mere physical life—rose again in his veins as the days went on, rose in a strong current, as the sap rises in trees when winter changes to spring. He was discharged from the hospital as cured, and interned in a concentration camp in Germany not far from the Dutch frontier. Though he had given

his parole to the gods, he would not give it to the Germans. He meant to escape some day if he could. He limped heavily, and had not got back the full strength of his once shattered right hand, so there was no hope of returning to fight under a new name. Had there been a chance of that, he would have wished to join the French Foreign Legion, where a man can be of use as a soldier, while lost to the world. As it was, he made no definite plans, but set about earning money in order not to be penniless if the day ever came when he could snatch at freedom.

He had always had a marked talent for quick character-sketches and a bold kind of portraiture. He could catch a likeness in a moment. With charcoal he dashed off caricatures of his fellow prisoners, on the whitewashed wall of the room which he shared with several British soldiers. The striking cleverness of the sketcher was noticed by the man in charge who spoke to some one higher in authority; and officers came to gaze gravely at the curious works of art. Denin had rechristened himself by this time "John Sanbourne." Sanbourne seemed to him

an appropriate name for one without an aim in life, and as for "John," without that standby he would have felt like a man who has thrown away his clothes. Sanbourne's charcoal sketches, therefore, began to be talked about; and officers brought him paper and colored chalks, bargaining with him for a few German war notes, to take their portraits. By the end of May he had saved up two hundred marks, accumulated in this way, charging from five to twenty marks for a sketch, according to size and detailed magnificence of uniform.

Not having given his parole, he was carefully watched at first, but as time went on his lameness, his exemplary conduct, and air of stoical resignation deceived his guards. One dark night he slipped away, contrived to pass the frontier, bribed a Dutch fisherman to sell him clothing, and after a week of starvation and hardship limped boldly into Rotterdam. There he parted with the remainder of his earnings (save a few marks) for a third-class ticket to New York, trusting to luck that he might earn money on board as he had earned money in camp,

enough at least to be admitted as an emigrant into the United States. Those few marks which he kept, he invested in artist's materials, and on shipboard soon made himself something of a celebrity in a small way. He was nicknamed "the steerage Sargent," and with an hour or two of work every day put together nearly sixty American dollars during the voyage. That sum satisfied him. He refused further commissions, for a great new obsession dominated his whole being, preoccupying every thought. Absorbed in it, he found his portrait-making exasperating work. Something within him that he did not understand but was forced to obey, commanded the writing of a book—the book, not of his life or of his outside experiences, but of his heart.

He had no idea of publishing this book after it was written. Indeed, at the beginning, such an idea would have been abhorrent to him. It would have been much like profaning a sanctuary. But there were thoughts which seemed to be in his soul, rather than in his brain, so intimate a part of himself were they; and these thoughts beat with strong wings

against the barrier of silence, like fierce wild birds against the bars of a cage.

So ignorant was John Denin of book-writing that he did not know at all how long it would take to put on paper what he felt he had to give forth. He knew only that he must say what was in him to say; and every moment when he was not writing he chafed to get back to his book again. Indeed, it was but his body which parted from the manuscript even when he ate, or walked, or slept. His real self was writing on and on, every instant, after he had gone to bed, and most of all, while he dreamed. The idea for the book, when it sprang into his mind, was full-grown as Minerva born from the brain of Jove. Denin felt as if he were a sculptor who sees his statue buried deep in a marble block, and has but to hew away the stone to set the image free. He got up each morning at dawn, bathed, dressed hurriedly, and worked till breakfast time, when a cup of tea and a piece of bread were all he wanted or felt he had time to take. Then, in some out-of-the-way, uncomfortable corner where his fellow travelers of the

steerage were not likely to interrupt him, he wrote on often till evening, without stopping to eat at noon. He used ship's stationery begged from the second class, sheets off his own drawing pads, and small blank books that happened to be for sale in the wonderful collection of things ships' barbers always have. Sometimes he scribbled fast with one pencil after another: sometimes he scratched painfully along with a bad pen. But nothing mattered, if he could write. And nothing disturbed him; no noise of yelling laughter, no shouting game, no crying of babies, nor blowing of bugles.

"When that chap 's got his nose to his paper, he would n't hear Gabriel's trump," one man said of him to another. Everybody asked everybody else what he was doing when he suddenly stopped his traffic of portraits; but nobody dared put such a question to him. Some people guessed that he was a journalist in disguise, who had been in the war-zone, and was working against time to get his experiences onto paper before the ship docked at New York. But, as a matter of fact, it did not occur to

Denin to wonder when he should finish until, suddenly and to his own surprise, the strange story he had been writing—if it could be called a story—came to its inevitable climax. His message was finished. There was no more that he wished to say.

This was at twelve o'clock one night, and the next morning at six the ship passed the Statue of Liberty.

Denin felt dazed among his fellow emigrants, all of whom were of a different class in life from his, and all of whom seemed to have something definite to expect, something which filled them with excitement or perhaps hope, making them talk fast, and laugh as the immense buildings of New York loomed picturesquely out of the silver mist.

"Othello's occupation 's gone," he found himself muttering as he leaned on the rail, a lonely figure among those who had picked up friendships on the voyage. He realized that he had been almost happy while he was writing his story. Now that it was finished and had to be put aside, he had nothing to look forward to. He was indeed *sans bourne.*

What the other steerage passengers did on landing,

he did also. Vaguely it appealed to his sense of humor (which had slept of late) that he, Sir John Denin, should have his tongue looked at and questions put to him concerning his means, character, and purpose in coming from Europe to the United States. He went through the ordeal with good nature, and passed doctors and inspectors without difficulty. When he was free, he joined a couple of elderly Belgians to whom he had talked on shipboard, and with them set forth in search of a cheap lodging-house, where he might stay until he made up his mind what work he was fit to try for, and do. He was a poor man now, and could not afford to live in idleness for more than a few days. He realized this, also that a "job" of any kind was hard to get, and doubly hard for him since he was not trained for clerical work or strong enough at the moment to undertake manual labor. Still, he could not resist the intense desire he had to shut himself up and read the book which, when he thought of it, seemed to have written itself. He had always gone on and on, never stopping to glance back or correct; and he had a queer

feeling that the story would be a revelation to him, that help and comfort and strength would come to him from its pages.

The Belgians remained in the lodging-house only long enough to unpack a few things. They then went out together to see New York, and visit an agency which had been recommended to them. But Denin shut himself up as he had longed impatiently to do, in the tiny back room he had engaged, on the top floor of a dreary house. There he took from the cheap bag bought in Rotterdam—his one piece of luggage—the oddly assorted pages of manuscript which made up a thick packet. With the moment that he began to read, the stained walls and the dirty window with a fire-escape outside vanished as if some geni had rubbed a lamp.

The story was of a soldier and his love for a girl who did not greatly care for him. She married him rather than send him away empty-hearted to the front, cold with disappointment, when it was in her power to arm him with happiness. They parted on the day of the wedding. The soldier went to France

and was killed in his first fight. The girl grieved because it had not been possible to love the man with her whole heart, and because he had had no time (so she believed) to taste the joy she had sacrificed herself to give. But the man, going into battle and afterwards dying on the battlefield, was divinely happy and content. He saw clearly that his love for her had been the great thing in his life, its crown and its completion; that the thought of her as his wife was worth being born for; that it made death only a night full of stars with a promise of sunrise. The story did not end with the ending of the soldier's life. The part before his death was no more than a prelude. The real story was of the power of love upon the spirit of a man after his passing, and his wish that the adored woman left behind might know the vital influence of a few hours' happiness in shaping a soul to face eternity. The book was supposed to be written in the first person, by the man, and was in four parts. The first told of the courtship and marrying; the second, of the man's going away from his wife-of-an-hour, to the front, and his

fall on the battlefield; the third described the regret of the girl that she had not been able to give more, and her resolve to atone by denying herself love if it came to her in future; the fourth, the dead soldier's attempt to make her feel the truth; that she was free of obligation because those few last hours had been a gift of joy never to be taken from his soul.

Denin had dashed down a title on the first page of his manuscript before beginning the book. There had seemed to him only one name for it: "The War Wedding." Now that he came to read it all over, he still had the feeling that something in him more powerful than himself had done the writing; and suddenly he began to wish intensely that Barbara might see the testament of his heart.

He wished this not because he was proud of his work, or thought it superlatively good, but because he hoped that it might comfort her. She had been strangely reserved with him, invariably baffling, almost mysterious, during the latter half of their acquaintance, yet he had felt that he knew the truth

of her nature, deep down under the girlish concealments. He had believed her tender-hearted. If she had not been so, why had she married him? And he thought that a girl of her strong character and sensitive spirit might be stabbed with remorse sometimes after gathering the flower of happiness for herself so near a new-made grave. He could not bear to think that Barbara might torture her conscience for his sake. He wanted her to be happy, wanted it more than anything else now. Not that he was naturally a marvel of unselfishness, but that he loved Barbara Fay better than he had ever loved himself. If this story which he had written—like, yet unlike, her own story—should happen to fall into Barbara's hands, she might find consolation through all the coming years, because of certain thoughts from the man's point of view, thoughts that would almost surely be new to her. And what joy for Denin, even lying in the gulf of forgetfulness, if his hand could reach out from the shadows to give her a thornless white rose of peace!

He wondered eagerly if he could find a publisher

in New York—a publisher who produced books in England as well as America—to accept his manuscript.

Now that the wish was born, it seemed too good to be true that anything could come of it. Still, he determined to try, and try at once. Full of excitecitement he went out into a noisy street, and bought several newspapers and magazines. There were a number of publishers' advertisements in them all, some with familiar names, but one he had known ever since he was old enough to read books. It was a name of importance in the publishing world, but there was no harm in aiming high. He had brought the manuscript out with him, because he could not bear to leave it alone in a strange house. Now he decided to take the parcel to the publisher himself. Nothing would have induced him to trust it to the post.

## CHAPTER V

FOUR-THIRTY in the afternoon was Eversedge Sibley's hour for leaving his office. If he had cared about escaping earlier he could easily have got away, for since his father's death he stood at the head of the old publishing house; but to him business was the romance, poetry, and adventure of life. He passionately loved the champ and roar of the printing-presses as many people love a Wagner opera. There were never two days alike. Something new was always happening. Yet just because he was young for his "job," and knew that he was a man of moods and temperament, he forced himself to be bound by certain rules. One of these rules was, even if he chose to linger a few minutes after four-thirty, that no caller need hope to be admitted. That was a favorite regulation of Sibley's. It made him feel that, after all, he was very methodical.

One afternoon, however, he did a worse thing than break this rule. He went back from the elevator, the whole length of the corridor to the outer office, simply to enquire about a man he had met at the lift door.

They almost collided as the man was stepping out and as Sibley was about to step in. But he did not step in. He let the lift shoot down without him, while he paused to stare after the man.

"Strange-looking customer!" he thought.

Sibley himself was a particularly immaculate person. Being somewhat of the Latin type, black eyed and olive skinned, he was shamefacedly afraid of looking picturesque. He dressed, therefore, as precisely as a fashion-plate. The man who had got out of the lift might have bought his clothes at a junk-shop, and a foreign junk-shop at that. They were not clothes a gentleman could wear—yet Sibley received a swift impression that a gentleman was wearing them at that moment: a remarkably tall fellow, so thin that his bones looked somehow too big for him.

He walked past Sibley with no more than a glance, yet it was partly the glance which impelled Sibley to stop short and gaze at the back of a badly made tweed coat, the worst sort of a "reach-me-down" coat.

The quick mind of the publisher was addicted to similes. (He had once written a book himself, under a *nom de guerre.* It had failed.) The thought sprang to his mind that the glance was like the sudden opening of a dingy box, which let out a flash of secret jewels.

In spite of his shocking clothes, the man had the air and bearing of a soldier. Sibley noticed this, in criticizing the straight back, and it aroused his curiosity more than ever in connection with the scarred face.

Any one who got out at the tenth floor of the Sibley building must want to see Eversedge Sibley or one of his partners, so evidently this person intended to ask for some member of the firm. He looked the last man on earth to be a budding author; yet Eversedge Sibley had caught sight of a paper-

wrapped roll of manuscript. One who was not of the publishing or editorial world might have mistaken it for something else; but no manuscript would disguise itself from eyes so trained to fear and avoid it.

"Looks more like a heavy-weight champion invalided after a desperate scrap, than a writer; or like Samson betrayed by Delilah," thought Sibley, rather pleased with the fancy.

He put out his hand to touch the bell for the lift to come up again, but did not touch it. Instead, he turned and walked back along the marble-walled corridor to the door of the reception room. The tall man had just arrived and was talking to a wisp of a creature facetiously known in the office as "the chucker out."

"Mr. Sibley has gone, sir," little McNutt was insisting, with dignity. "He does n't generally receive strangers. Mr. Elliot is in, though, and might see you if you could wait—"

As he spoke, McNutt caught sight of his "boss" at the door, and by looking up a pair of thick gray

eyebrows, he made a distressful signal of warning. It would be awkward for Mr. Sibley to be trapped and buttonholed here, just as he had been officially described as out. McNutt could not remember the boss ever coming back after he had gone for the day, and appearing in the publicity of the reception room. If he had forgotten something, why did n't he let himself in at the door of his own private office, which was only a little further along the hall? But, there he was, and must be protected.

"Who is Mr. Elliot?" enquired the stranger.

Eversedge Sibley spent a short holiday in England every summer, and knew that the vilely dressed man had the accent of the British upper classes. His curiosity grew with what it fed on.

"Mr. Elliot is the third partner in the firm," explained McNutt, to whom such ignorance appeared disgraceful.

"Thank you, I 'd rather wait until to-morrow and try to see Mr. Sibley himself," said Denin.

"I am Mr. Sibley," the publisher confessed, on one of his irresistible impulses. "I 've just come

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back for something forgotten. I can give you a few minutes if you like."

The man's face lit. It could never have been anything but plain, almost ugly, even before the scars came; yet it was singularly arresting. "That 's very good of you," he said.

Sibley ushered the odd visitor into his own private office, but before he could even be invited to sit down, Denin got to his errand.

"You must have thousands of manuscripts sent to you," he began, with a shyness which appealed to Sibley. "I—suppose you hardly ever read one yourself? You have men under you to do that. But I felt I should n't be satisfied unless I could put the—the stuff I 've written into your own hands. Probably all amateurs feel like that!"

"Manuscripts which our readers pronounce on favorably I always go through myself before accepting them," Sibley assured his visitor. "But of course, there are a good many that—er—they don't think worth bothering me with."

"There 's no reason for me to hope that mine will

deserve a better fate," Denin said. "All the same it would—be a great thing for me if you should bring it out—publish it on both sides of the water. It is n't as if I expected money for my work. I don't. I should n't even *want* money. On the contrary—"

Sibley cut him short with a warning. "We 're not the sort of publishers who print books that authors have to bribe us to put on the market. If a book 's worth our while to publish, it 's worth our while to pay for it."

Denin laughed. "I was n't going to suggest any arrangement of that kind," he apologized. "I 'm too poor for such a luxury. I 've just come to New York, third class, and I must 'hustle' to make my living. But I wrote this on shipboard, while I had the time—"

"You wrote a whole book on shipboard!" exclaimed Sibley.

Denin was taken aback by the publisher's surprise. "Well, it was a slow boat—twelve days. And my mind was full of this story. I had to write it. I kept at it night and day. But for all I know there

may n't be enough to make a book. That would be a bit of a blow! I 'm as ignorant as a child of such things."

"About how many thousand words does your manuscript amount to?" Sibley asked, glancing at the rather thin brown packet tied with a string.

"I have n't the remotest idea!" Denin admitted. "It did n't occur to me to count words."

"H'm!" muttered the publisher. "You say it 's a story—a novel?"

"It 's a sort of a story," its writer explained. "I may as well mention—you 're sure to guess if you glance over my work—that I 've been fighting in France. I was pretty badly knocked out—some months ago. And you can see from the look of me that I can't be of use as a soldier while the war lasts, if ever. Otherwise I should n't be in New York now. One does n't chuck fighting in these days unless one 's unfit. While I was in hospital, I got to thinking how a man might feel in certain circumstances—(not like my own, of course; but one imagines things)—and—well, the idea rather took hold

of me. Here it is. I don't expect you to read the thing yourself. It 's not likely that—"

"I promise you so much," said Sibley, with suppressed eagerness. "I *will* read it myself before handing it over to any one else."

The scarred face flushed; and again came that sudden light as from a secret glitter of jewels. "I can't thank you enough!" Denin almost stammered.

"Don't thank me yet. That would be very premature!" Sibley smiled generously; but even if he had wished to do so, he could n't have patronized the fellow. "You must n't be too impatient. I 'm a busy man, you know. I 'll have a go at your manuscript as soon as I can, but you must n't be disappointed if you don't hear for a week or ten days. By the way, you 'd better give me a card with your name and address."

Denin laughed again, a singularly pleasant laugh, Sibley thought it. "I have n't such a thing as a card! My name is—John Sanbourne. And if I may have a scrap of paper, I 'll write down my address. I forgot to put it on the manuscript. I

may n't be at the same place when you 're ready to decide. But I 'll tell them to forward the letter, and then I 'll call on you. I 'd rather do that than let the story go through the post. I 've got—fond of it in a way—you see!"

Sibley did see. And the man being what he was, the fondness struck the publisher as pathetic, like the love of Picciola for his pale prison-flower. Reason told Sibley that the ten or twelve days work of an amateur (one who had lived to thirty or so, without being moved to write) would turn out mere twaddle. Yet instinct contradicted reason, as it often did with Sibley. He had a strong presentiment that he should find at least some remarkable points in the work of this scarred soldier, whose square-jawed face seemed to the secretly romantic mind of Sibley a mask of hidden passions.

Only a few times since he became head of the house had Eversedge Sibley consented to see a would-be author whose fame was all to make. The few he had received had been fascinating young women of society with influence among his friends, famous

beauties, or noted charmers; but he had never taken so deep an interest in one of them as in the poverty-stricken, steerage passenger. He went as far as the reception room in showing his guest out; and then instead of going down to his motor, which would be waiting for him, let it wait. He returned to his office, and looked again at the address which the author had laid on his parcel of manuscript.

"John Sanbourne!" Eversedge Sibley said to himself, aloud. The man's face was as sincere as it was plain, nevertheless Sibley was somehow sure that his real name was not Sanbourne. He was sure that the inner truth of the man, if it could but be known, was a contradiction of the rough and strange outside; and he wished so intensely to get at the hidden inner side that he could not resist opening the parcel there and then.

Never had Eversedge Sibley seen such a manuscript. He was used to clearly typed pages of uniform size, as easy to read as print. This was written partly with pencil, partly with pen and ink, apparently three or four different kinds of pens, each

worse than the other. The paper, too, consisted of odds and ends. The whole thing suggested poverty and the meager condition of a steerage passenger. But this squalor, which in most circumstances would have caused Sibley to fling down the stuff in fastidious disgust, sent a thrill through him. No ordinary man with ordinary things to say could have had the courage to struggle through such difficulties, to any desired end. The longing to tell this story, whatever it was, must have been strong in the man's soul as the urge of travail in the body of a woman.

In spite of the mean materials, the writing was clear, and suggested—it seemed to the mood of Sibley—something of the man's strength and intense reserve.

"'The War Wedding,'" he read at the top of the first page. "Heavens, I hope it 's not going to be in blank verse!"

It was not in blank verse. He had to read only the first lines to assure himself of that.

The story began with the description of a garden. It was simply done, but it painted a picture, and—

praise be to the powers, there were no split infinitives nor gush of adjectives! Eversedge Sibley saw the garden. He was the man who walked in it, and met the girl who came down the stone steps between the blue borders of lavender. The story became his story. For an hour he forgot his office, his waiting chauffeur, and everything else that belonged to him.

So he might have gone on forgetting, if Stephen Eversedge, his junior partner and cousin, had not peeped anxiously in at the door. "They said you 'd gone away and then come back. I thought I 'd just ask if anything was the matter," he excused himself to the master mind.

"The matter is, we 've got hold of the most wonderful human document—good God, yes, and *soul* document!—that any house in this country or any other has ever published!" The words burst out from Sibley like bullets from a *mitrailleuse.*

## CHAPTER VI

DENIN hardly knew what to think of the telegram which came next morning. It asked him to call at once on Mr. Sibley; but Denin, warned that the manuscript story could not be read for a week or more, did not dream that the publisher had already raced through it. His fear was that a mere glance at the first page had been enough, showing the skilled critic that the work lacked literary value; or else that the bulk was insufficient to make a book. Mr. Sibley might, in kindness, wish to end the author's suspense, and put him out of misery.

When the message arrived, Denin was reading and marking newspaper advertisements. He meant to go without delay to several places of business that offered more or less suitable work; but he was ready to risk missing any chance, no matter how good, when the fate of his ewe lamb was at stake.

He was too despondent at the thought of its rejection to plan placing it elsewhere, but he could not bear to lose time in reclaiming it.

He felt, as he was led once more into Sibley's private office, as if he had to face a painful operation without anesthetics, so sensitive had he come to be on the subject of his story—the manuscript of his heart, written in the blood of his sacrifice. There lay the familiar pages on the desk, all ready, he did not doubt, to be wrapped up and handed back to him. He had so schooled himself to a refusal that the publisher's first words made his head swim. He could not believe that he heard aright.

"Well, Mr. Sanbourne, I congratulate you!" Sibley said, getting up from his desk-chair and holding out a cordial hand. "We congratulate ourselves on the chance of publishing your book."

Denin took the hand held out and moved it up and down mechanically, but did not speak. Following the publisher's extreme graciousness his silence might have seemed boorish, but Sibley knew how to interpret it. He realized that the other was

struck dumb, and he felt a thrill of romantic delight in the situation, in his own august power to confer benefits. He was not conducting himself as a business man in this case, but he knew by sureness of instinct that the strange amateur would take no mean advantage of his confessed enthusiasm.

"We think," he went on, "that you have written something very original and very beautiful. Without being sentimental, it 's full of that kind of indescribable sentiment which goes straight to the heart. It will be a short book, only about fifty thousand words, or even less; but that does n't matter, because a word added or a word left out would make a false note. The thing 's an inspiration. You 've got a big success before you. You ought to be a happy man, Mr. Sanbourne."

"You make me feel as if I were in a dream," said Denin.

"That 's the way your story has made *me* feel," said Sibley. "Really, your method has an extraordinary effect. Talking of dreams, it 's almost as

if you 'd written the whole story in some strange, inspired dream."

"Perhaps I did write it so," Denin said, more as if he spoke to himself than to another. "I had no method—consciously. The story just came."

"One feels that, and it 's the most compelling part of its charm," said Sibley. "Well, now I 've paid you your due of appreciation. Sit down, and let us talk business."

"Business?" Denin echoed, rather stupidly. But he accepted the chair his host offered, and Sibley too sat down.

"Yes, business," the publisher cheerily repeated. "We should like to rush the book out as soon as possible. It 's too late to have it set up and given to our spring travelers to take round and show to the trade—which is one of the most valuable ways of advertising, I assure you. But in an immense country like America that means months of traveling before a book appears. Yours has a specially poignant interest at the moment, and I have so much faith in its power that I believe it can advertise itself. Of

course I don't mean that we won't give it big publicity in the newspapers. We shall spread ourselves in that way, and spend a lot of money."

"And can you get the book out soon in England, too?" asked Denin.

"Oh, yes. We 'll produce here and there simultaneously, and do it in a record rush, if you can promise to stay on the spot and read proofs."

"I 'll do whatever you wish," said Denin.

"Now about the question of money," Sibley went on, exquisitely and literaly "enjoying himself." "Some people call me hard as nails, a regular skinflint. And so I am, with those who try to squeeze me. I don't think you 'll have any such complaint to make. Your name is unknown, but I believe in your book and I want to be generous with you. What do you say to an advance payment of three thousand dollars, with fifteen per cent. royalty for the first ten thousand sales, and twenty per cent. after that?"

"But," stammered Denin, astounded. "I told you yesterday I did n't want payment. That was

true, what I said then. It would seem a kind of sacrilege to take money for such a book—a book I wrote because I wanted to—"

"I don't see that at all," Sibley cut in dryly. "You are the first author I—or any other publisher, I should think—ever had to urge to accept hard cash. But you 're probably an exception to a good many rules! We can't take your book as a present, you know! So if you want it published you 'll have to come round to our terms."

"You mean that?" asked Denin. "You won't bring out my story if I refuse your money?"

"I do mean that, though I should hate to sacrifice the book. And I honestly believe that many people would be happier for reading it."

"Very well then," Denin answered. "I 'll accept the money and thank you for it. I want my book to come out, more than I want anything else —that—that can possibly happen."

To a man who had lived from hand to mouth as John Sanbourne had since Sir John Denin died, three thousand dollars seemed something like a fortune.

He had lost his old sense of proportion in life, and had almost forgotten how it felt to have all the money he wanted. Perhaps he forgot more easily than most men of his class, for he had never cared greatly for the things which money alone can buy. His tastes had always seemed to his friends ridiculously simple, so simple as to be dangerously near affectation; and as a small boy he had announced firmly that he would "rather be a gardener in a beautiful garden, than one of those millionaires who have to do their business always in towns." Now, when he had recovered from the first shock of accepting money for the book of his heart, he began to reflect how to plan his life. The thought that he could have a garden was a real incentive, for working in a garden would save him from the unending desolation of uselessness, when the last proofs were corrected and there was no longer any work to do on his story.

Barbara and Mrs. Fay had both talked to John Denin about their old home in California, and with the knowledge that he could afford it a keen wish

was suddenly born in John Sanbourne to make some kind of a home for himself in the country where Barbara had lived. She was named, her mother had told him, after Santa Barbara. The girl had been born near Santa Barbara, and had grown up there to the age of thirteen, when her father had died and their place had been sold. After that, the mother and daughter had gone to Paris. Denin recalled with crystal clearness all the girl's warm, eager picturing of her old home, for he remembered scenery and even descriptions of scenery with greater distinctness than he remembered faces. He had often thought (until he met Barbara, and fell in love) that he cared more for nature and places and things than he could ever care for people, except those of his very own flesh and blood. He knew differently now, but it seemed to him that he would be nearer finding peace in Barbara's home-country than anywhere else in the world.

There was no danger that she or her mother might some day appear and meet him face to face, to the ruin of Barbara's dream of happiness with Trevor

d'Arcy. Mother and daughter had said that they never wished to go back, now that the old ties were broken. When occasionally they returned to America, they spent their time in Washington and New York; but with Barbara married to Trevor d'Arcy, and mistress in her own right of Gorston Old Hall, all interests would combine to keep mother and daughter in England. John Denin's ghost might, if it chose, safely haunt the birthplace of his lost love.

The day that the last proof-sheet of "The War Wedding" was corrected, Sanbourne said good-by to Eversedge Sibley and started for California. He could not afford to travel by the Limited or any of the fast trains, so there were many changes and waits for him, and he was nearly a week on the way; but when a man has lost or thrown over the best things in his life there is the consolation that none of its small hardships seem to matter. Besides, he had Santa Barbara to look forward to; and Denin told himself that, things being as they were, he was lucky to have anything to look forward to at all.

When he reached the end of the journey at last it was almost like coming to a place he had known in dreams, so clearly did he recognize the mountains whose lovely shapes crowded towards the sea. Barbara had all their names by heart and treasured their photographs. He remembered her stories of the islands, too, floating on the horizon like boats at anchor; and the trails of golden kelp seen through the green transparence of the waves, like the hair of sleeping mermaids. In the same way he knew the big hotel with its mile-long drive bordered with flaming geraniums; he knew the old town and—without asking—how to go from there to the Mission. Also he knew that, on the way to the Mission, he would find the place which Barbara had cared for most until she fell in love—not with him—but with Gorston Old Hall.

He limped perceptibly still, and could not walk far without pain, so he decided to be extravagant for the first time since "coming into his money" and hire a small, cheap motor-car. It was driven by its small, cheap owner, a young man with a ferocious

fund of information about Santa Barbara, and every one who had ever lived there.

"Heard of the Fay place?" he echoed Denin's first question. "Well, I should smile! Why, me and Barbie Fay are about the same age," he plunged on, so violently that no interruption could have stopped him. "Not that we were in the same *set*. Not much! But a cat can look at a king. And any boy can look at any girl, I guess. Gee! That little girl was some *worth* lookin' at! Her mother thought she was too good for us plain Americans, so she took her off to Europe and clapped her in a convent, after the old man died. They 've never been back this way since, nor won't be now. The girl 's been married twice, I was readin' in the papers. Once to some English lord or other who left her the same day, and got himself killed in France; and the second time, just a few weeks ago, to a cousin on her mother's side—a Britisher, too. There was an interview with the mother in the *San Francisco Call*, I saw. One of our California journalists over there in the war-zone got it—quite a good scoop. Mrs.

Fay said it was an old romance between Barbie and this Captain-What 's-his-name. But we never seen him here. I guess he 's English, root and branch. Good thing for that 'old romance' they could make sure the other chap was killed all right, all right, was n't it? Some of them poor fellows gets blown to bits so you can't tell one from t' other, they say, But the girl's mother mentioned to our *Call* reporter, that they knew the husband's body by a stylograph pen in a gold case, which was her own last present to him. If it had n't been for that little thing, found in a rag or two left of the feller's coat, Barbie would n't have dast married again, I bet. Say, that 's one of them anecdotes they put under the heading of 'Too Strange not to be True!' ain't it?"

"Yes, it is strange," Denin repeated mechanically. It was strange, too—above all strange—that he should have had to come to Barbara's birthplace to learn this detail casually. A thousand times he had wondered how they had identified John Denin's body with enough certainty to take it back to England and give it a funeral with military honors.

Perhaps, if he had not come to Santa Barbara and in Santa Barbara happened to stumble upon this loquacious fellow with the motor-car to hire, he might have gone through all the rest of his life without knowing. And another strange thing was that he had lent the stylographic pen—Mrs. Fay's last present—to a man who wanted to write a letter just before the battle. That man, who had been killed, was possibly still reported "missing," while John Denin's wife, assured of his death by a peculiarly intimate clue, had been able to take her happiness without fear. If Barbara's mother had not given him the pen, he would not now be numbered among the dead, but would have been free to go back to his wife of an hour, and perhaps even teach her to love him in the end.

Well, all that did n't bear thinking of now! He tried, as he had tried a hundred times—but never so poignantly—to hold in his heart the memory of flaming happiness worth all the pain of living through the burnt-out years: the happiness he had put into the pages of his "War Wedding."

With some people who had known Barbara he would have liked to talk of her, but not with this crude youth who spouted her praises from a mouth full of chewing gum. Denin answered a pointed question of the chauffeur's by saying that he had enquired about the Fay place because he heard it was worth seeing. He might like to buy a little property somewhere near if it could be got.

"You bet it can be got!" was the prompt answer. "That is, if you want something little *enough*, you can get a bit of the old Fay property itself."

"Really?" said Denin. "I thought it was all disposed of years ago."

"So it was. Eight years ago and a bit. I remember because I made an errand to sneak down to the depot and see Barbie go off in the train, as pretty as a white rose, dressed in black for her pa. I was only a cub of fourteen. An old feller from the East, staying at the Potter, went crazy about the place and bought it at Mrs. Fay's own price. (Lucky for her! They say she 'd nothing else to live on!)

Feller by the name of Samuel Drake. He was out in California for his bronchitis or something, and took a fancy to the country. He wanted his married son with a young bride to live with him, so he got a real bright idea. I suppose the folks who told you about the Fay place never said nothing about a kind of little playhouse called the Mirador (Spanish for view-place or look-out, I guess), built at one end of the property that fronts to the sea?"

"I—rather think they did mention something of the kind," said Denin. The first time he had ever seen Barbara, at a dance soon after she was presented, she had happened to speak of the Mirador. It was a miniature house which her father had built for her at her favorite view point, as a birthday surprise, when she was ten. There was an "upstairs and a downstairs," a bath, and a "tiny, tiny kitchen" where she had been supposed to do her own cooking. In the sitting-room she had had lessons with her governess. The one upstairs room, with its wonderful view of the bay and the islands, had been turned into a bedroom for her, when she had scarlet fever

and had to be isolated with a nurse. She had "loved getting well there, and lying in her hammock on the balcony with curtains of roses."

"Old man Drake had the smart notion of putting on a couple more rooms in a wing at the back, and offering it to his son and his son's bride," the driver of the car was explaining, over the motor's cheap clatter. "But while the work was going on, the new beams caught fire one night (I guess some tramp could tell why) and the whole addition and a bit of the original burnt down. Just then the son changed his plans anyhow, and decided to go into business with his wife's folks in the East. That sort of sickened the old man, so he let the Mirador fall into rack and ruin; and now he spends about three quarters of his time in Boston with the son. I guess he 's sorry he was in such a hurry to buy the Fay place. Anyways, he won't spend money on the Mirador, but rather than it should stay the way it is, he 'll sell it in its present condition with enough ground to make a garden. The thing looks like a burnt bird's nest—except for the flowers, and the

house ain't much bigger than a baby doll's house. I suppose it would n't suit you, would it?"

"Perhaps it might," answered Denin, trying to speak calmly. But in his heart he meant to have Barbara's Mirador if it cost him every penny he had left from his advance on "The War Wedding." It was almost as if, to atone for taking herself out of his life, Barbara had given him this dear plaything of her childhood to remember her by.

"Well, you 'll be able to make up your mind," said his guide, slowing down the rattletrap car. "Here we are at the Fay place, now—or the Drake place, as maybe I ought to call it—and there 's the Mirador. No wonder old Drake wants to get it fixed up again! The way it is now, it spoils the look of the whole property."

The "Fay place" gave a first impression of having been an orange plantation transformed into a vast garden. There were acres and acres of land, Denin could not guess how many. In the midst of orange trees in fruit and blossom, and pepper trees shedding coral, and tall palm trees with long gray beards

which were last year's fronds, stood the big, rambling pink bungalow that had been Barbara's home. Its tiled roof and wide loggias were just visible from the road; but the Mirador, to which the driver pointed, was in plain sight. Denin's heart bounded. He almost expected to see a young girl with smoke-blue eyes and copper-beech hair (it had been red in those days, she 'd told him) open one of the shuttered windows and look out with a smile.

Once, while she and her mother were staying at Gorston Old Hall, he had tried to teach Barbara chess. In the midst of a game which she hoped to win, she suddenly saw herself facing defeat. "Let 's begin again, and play it all over!" she had cried out, laughing.

Ah, if they could do that now: begin again, and play the game all over!

Well, the ghost of John Denin could begin to play hero with the ghost of Barbara Fay's childhood, when he came to have his home in her old playhouse. He knew that this must and should be his home, now that he had come and seen the place and

felt its influence even more subtly than he had thought to feel it. He could not get through his shorn life anywhere else.

The Mirador was distant at least four acres from the house. It too was pink, like the parent bungalow, or it had once been pink, before the fire which destroyed the addition for servants at the back had marred the rose color of its plastered adobe walls. A roof of Spanish tiles dropped low like a visor, giving cover to the balcony of the upper story; and the floor of that balcony roofed the one below. On each of these balconies only one window—which was also a door—looked out; but it was a huge window, with green exterior shutters; and the stout, square columns of the two verandas were almost hidden with roses, passion-flower, and convolvulus which had either survived the fire or grown up since. Though the front was so nearly intact, from each side of the little house could be seen the blackened wreck of burnt beams; and to screen the parent bungalow from any possible glimpse of this eyesore, a high barrier of trellis-work had been erected about two hundred

feet distant from the Mirador. Over this barrier some quick-climbing creepers had been trained, and they had grown in such thick masses that an almost impenetrable green wall had already grown up between the big house and the tiny one.

"This will suit me exactly," said Denin, trying to speak coolly. "We 'll drive back at once, please, to the agent who has the selling of the Mirador."

. . . . . .

He was almost afraid to hear the price, lest his last dollar might not suffice to secure the treasure. But the agent in whose hands "old Drake" had put his business named the sum of two thousand dollars. This, he said, was a mere song for land so near Santa Barbara; and, no doubt, he was right. But it was a large slice of John Sanbourne's capital, and left him only a small remnant for repairing the place, as he must agree to do before the contract could be signed.

The journey from New York had cost a good deal, and—he must live somehow, unless he could get work fitted for a "lame dog" to do. Mr. Sibley had

talked vaguely of "royalties," but it seemed impossible to Denin that many people should actually care to *buy* his book—the strange little book written for himself, and sent wandering out into the world to find Barbara. Even if people did buy it, the sales could surely never go beyond the three thousand dollars Eversedge Sibley had recklessly pressed upon him in advance! However, Denin did not hesitate for any of these reasons. "I 'll buy the Mirador and the acre and a half of ground Mr. Drake is willing to sell with it," he said to the agent. "And I 'd like to pay for it if possible and settle up everything today. Then I could move into the house at once."

The agent stared. "There 's no furniture," he said.

"I can get in enough to begin with, in an hour or two, surely," Denin persisted. "I 'm used to roughing it."

The other could well believe that, from the look of the queer fellow! As a business man, he would certainly not accept a check, and would be inclined to ask expert opinion even on bank notes, paid by an

unknown client with such scars, and such clothes, and in such a hurry!

"You could hardly live in the house while the repairs you must agree to are being made," the agent reminded the would-be buyer. "Don't you think you had better—"

"I can manage all right," Denin cut short the advice. "As for the repairs, I shall make them of course. What Mr. Drake asks is for the house to be restored to its former appearance (are n't those the words?) not enlarged. Well, I must tell you frankly that I can't afford to pay for labor. I will guarantee to make the Mirador look just as it used to look, and do it all with my own hands. I can't work very fast, because—you can see, I 've been disabled. But I shall have an incentive to finish as soon as possible, if I 'm actually living in the house."

"You had a severe accident, I suppose?" the curious agent could not resist suggesting.

"It was—in a way—an accident," said Denin, and his smile was rather grim.

When he had paid for the place, had bought ma-

terials for restoring the house and improving the garden, had collected a few bits of furniture and added some other necessaries, the owner of the Mirador had only seven hundred dollars left out of his fortune Nor did he at that time know how he was to earn more dollars. Nevertheless he had come as near to be being content as he could ever hope to be in this world. He had given his own old home to Barbara, and there was no place for memories of him there. But she had given her old home to him (unconsciously, it was true; yet it seemed to be her gift) and memories of Barbara would be his companions each hour of the day. Besides, he had the task of restoring every marred feature of the little Mirador exactly as she had described it to him. He bought a ladder and plaster and paint, and did mason's work and painter's work with a good will. In the four rooms which were more or less intact—bedroom, sitting-room, miniature kitchen and bath—he put a few odds and ends of second-hand furniture, enough for a hermit. And when his labor of love on the house was accomplished, he set to work in the gar-

den. Some day, he told himself, he should find in the garden the greatest solace of all.

In his deep absorption, he forgot the book for days on end. Even in his dreams he did not remember it, for in the room where Barbara had lain ill with scarlet fever, dreams lent her to him, a childish Barbara, very kind and sweet. He knew the date on which the book was to come out, but he had lost count by a day or two, therefore it was a shock of surprise to open a parcel which arrived one morning by post, and to see six purple volumes. On each cover, in gold lettering, was printed "The War Wedding: John Sanbourne."

His hand shook a little as he opened the front page, and began to read. Strange, how poignantly real the story was in this form, more real even than when he had written it, or read it over in manuscript that first day in New York many weeks ago now. He went on and on, and could not stop. There was no servant in the Mirador to look after his wants, and so he had no food till evening; none until he had finished the book, and had walked for

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a long time in the garden, thinking it all over with passionate revival of interest. After that night the book again shared his dreams with Barbara. Sometimes in dreaming, he saw Barbara reading the story; but when he waked, he said to himself there were ten chances against one that she would ever hear of it.

When "The War Wedding" in volume form was about a fortnight or three weeks old, a thick envelope full of American press cuttings arrived for "Mr. John Sanbourne," from Eversedge Sibley and Company. Every critic, even those of the most important newspapers, praised the work of the unknown author with enthusiasm. A notice signed by a famous name said, "In reading this story, told with a limpid simplicity almost unique in the annals of story-writing, one forgets the printed page and feels that one is listening to a voice: not an ordinary voice, but the voice of a disembodied soul which has forgotten nothing of this existence and has already learned much about the next: a philosopher of crystal clearness and inspiring serenity."

Nearly all the criticisms had something in them

of the same curious exaltation of mood. The writers asked: "Who is John Sanbourne, that he can work this spell upon us?" And one said, "Whoever he is, he is bound to get post-bags full of 'appreciations' from half the women in the world, and a good many men."

A letter from Sibley was enclosed with the cuttings, congratulating the author. "This is only the first batch," he wrote, "but it 's a phenomenally big one for this short time. Evidently these hardened critics shared my weakness. When they began the book they could n't put it down till the end, and then they had to relieve their pent-up feelings by dashing them onto paper at white heat. Many of these reviews, as you 'll see by the date, appeared on the day after publication, most of the others on that following. Such opinions by such critics in such papers have sold the book like hot cakes. Luckily we expected a huge demand, or we should already be unable to supply it. Thanks to our foresight we have a second and third big edition ready, and an immense fourth one in the press. We have heard by cable that our history over here is repeating it-

self in England. The exact wording is, 'Reviews and orders unprecedented.' You will be getting offers from all the publishers for your next work, but we hope you 'll be true to us. I am in earnest when I speak of this, for if I am interviewed, I should like to be able to say, 'Mr. Sanbourne has already an idea for another book which we hope to publish about a year from now.' That will keep them remembering you! Not that they 're likely to forget for awhile. They 'll be too busy crying—the women, I mean, and I should n't consider a man safe without his handkerchief. Please wire about the new book. Also whether we are at liberty to answer the numerous journalistic questions we 're getting about you, with any personal details, or whether you prefer to hide behind a veil of mystery. I 'm not sure myself which is preferable."

But Sanbourne was very sure. He left his garden work to walk to Santa Barbara and send a telegram.

"Say nothing about me to any one, please, except that I shall never write another book."

# PART II
# THE LETTERS

## CHAPTER VII

JOHN SANBOURNE had smiled when he read the critic's prophecy that he was "bound to get letters of appreciation from half the women in the world," and he had thought no more of the comic suggestion until the letters began to come. But the letters were not comic.

They were forwarded in large packets by Sibley and Company, and there were many, incredibly many of them; some from men, but mostly from women. The writers felt impelled to tell the author of "The War Wedding" what a wonderful book they thought it was, or how much good it had done them in their different states of mind. These states the readers of Sanbourne's book described almost as penitents confessing to a priest detail their sins. And the strange confidences, or pitiful pleadings for advice and help from one who "seemed to know such glorious truths about life and death,"

were desperately pathetic to Denin. He was utterly amazed and overwhelmed by this phase of his unlooked-for success, and knew not how to cope with it.

The first thousand and more letters were all from people in the United States. Then letters from Canada began drifting in. At last, when "The War Wedding" had been on sale and selling edition after edition for eight weeks, a rather smaller parcel than usual arrived from the publishers. Denin, who was in the garden, took it from the postman, at the new gate which led to the Mirador. It was in the morning, and he had been gathering late roses; for every day he decorated with her favorite blossoms the two principal rooms of the house which child-Barbara had loved. He had a big pair of scissors in his hand; and sitting down on a bench, in the cool strip of shade that ran the length of the lower balcony, he cut the string which fastened the packet. This he did, not because he was impatient to see what it contained, but because he was warm and tired after two hours of garden work and wanted an excuse to

rest. The letters of so many sad women who begged for counsel that he knew not how to give, were having a shattering effect upon his nerves. He had not supposed that there were so many tragic souls of women in the world, outside the war-zone, and he dreaded the details of their lives. Sometimes he was half tempted to put the letters away or destroy them, unread.

There was a vague hope in his mind that this parcel might have something other than letters in it: but as the shears bit the tightly tied string, the stout linen envelope burst open and began to disgorge its contents: letters—letters—letters!

Between his feet John Sanbourne had placed the basket of roses; and the letters, falling out of the big envelope, began to drop onto the green leaves and crêpy-crisp blooms of pink and white and cream.

"English stamps!" he said aloud—for the habit had grown upon him of talking to himself. Bending down to pick up the letters, a dark flush streamed to his forehead. There was one envelope of the

same texture, the same gray-blue tint, and the same long, narrow shape that Sir John Denin had liked and always used at Gorston Old Hall. It had fallen face downward; and as he rescued it from a fragrant bath of dew, he slowly turned it over. There was an English stamp upon this envelope also, and it was addressed to "John Sanbourne, Esq., care of Messrs. Eversedge Sibley and Company," in Barbara's handwriting.

For an instant everything went black, just as it had done months ago when he had got on his feet too suddenly in hospital. He shut his eyes, and leaned back with his head against the house wall—the wall of Barbara's Mirador. It was as if he could hear her voice speaking to him across six thousand miles of land and sea. But it spoke to John Sanbourne, not to John Denin.

"My God—she 's read the book. *She 's written!*"

He had to say the words over to himself before he could make the thing seem credible.

And even then he did not open the letter. He dreaded to open it, and sat very still and rigid, grasp-

ing the envelope as if it were an electric battery of which he could not let go.

What if she hated the book? What if she wrote, as a woman who had been twice a war bride, to say that a subject such as he had chosen was too sacred to put into print? What if she felt bound to reproach the author for treading brutally on holy ground?

If that was what the letter had to say to him, his message of peace had failed, and all his patched-up scheme of existence broke down in that one failure.

The thought that he was a coward shrinking from a blow nerved him to open the letter. He was on the point of tearing the envelope, but he could not be rough with a thing Barbara had touched, nor could he deface it. He took up the scissors and cut off one end of the envelope, then drew out a sheet of the familiar gray-blue paper. Unfolding it, his hands trembled. All the rest of his life, such as it was, he felt, hung on what he was about to read.

The letter began abruptly. "You must have

many letters from strangers, but none will bring you more gratitude than this. If you are like your book, you are too generous to be bored by grateful words from people whose sore hearts you helped to heal, so I won't apologize. You could not write as you do, I think, if you did n't want to do good to others. Will you then help me, even more than you have helped me already, by answering a question I am going to ask? Will you tell me whether the wonderful things you say, to comfort those of us who are losing our dearest in battle, are just inspired *thoughts*, or whether you have yourself been very near death, so near that you caught a vision from the other side? If you answer me, and if you say that actual experience gave you this knowledge, your book—which has already been like a strong hand dragging me up from the depths—will become a beautiful message meant especially for me out of all the whole world, making all my future life bearable.

"Every night for months I 've gone to bed unable to sleep, because I 've felt exactly as if my brain

were a battlefield, full of the agony and hopelessness of brave men dying violent and dreadful deaths, cut off in the midst of youth, with the stories of their lives tragically unfinished. But since I read in your book that marvelous scene with those suddenly released spirits—young men of both sides, friends and enemies, meeting and talking to each other, saying, 'Is this all?' 'Is this the worst that death can do to us?' why, I seem to pass beyond the battlefield! I go with those happy, surprised young men who are seeing for the first time the great 'reality behind the thing' and a feeling of rest and immense peace comes to me. I don't keep it long at a time. I can't, yet. But if you write and say you *know*, I think I may some day learn to keep it.

"I have the English edition of your book, but I have read in a newspaper an extract from the interview a journalist had with the publisher in New York. You see, everybody who has some one dear in the war, or has lost some one beloved, is reading and talking of the book. They all want to know things about you, but perhaps not all for as *real* a

reason as mine. Some people have said that perhaps the author may be a woman, who chooses to write under a man's name. I felt sure from the first it could n't be so, for only a man could say those things as you say them; but I was glad of your publisher's assurance that you are a man, and that your home now is in the far West in America. Perhaps I should n't have dared write you if you were in this country, because—but no, I need n't explain.

"My name can be of no interest to you, yet I will sign it.

"Yours gratefully, Barbara Denin."

"Barbara Denin." . . . *She had kept his name!*

Many a woman did (he was aware) after a second marriage continue to use the name of her first husband, in order to retain a title. But all he knew of the girl Barbara Fay made it amazing to him that she should hold to the name of a man she had never loved, after becoming the wife of a man she had loved since childhood.

A wild doubt set his brain on fire. Could there have been some terrible misunderstanding? Was it

possible that after all she had never married Trevor d'Arcy? . . . Carried away on the flame of passion fanned by her letter, Denin told himself that it might be so, and that if she were free he would still have the right to go back to her. If she had not given herself to another man she belonged to him, to him alone, and she would not hate him if he explained the sacrifice he had made for her sake.

He was on his feet before he knew what he was doing. The blinding hope lit body and soul as with some curative ray beyond the ultra violet. It shot, through his worn frame, life and abounding health, making of him for a magical moment more than the man he had been a year ago. But it was only a moment; indeed, less than a moment. For it did not take him sixty seconds to remember *how* he had heard of Barbara's marriage to her cousin Captain d'Arcy. Walter Severne the airman had said that her wedding had taken place on the same day with his own. Severne had blamed her. Every word he had said was branded on Denin's brain. There could be no mistake. Whatever the motive might

be for signing herself Barbara Denin, she was in all certainty d'Arcy's wife.

With the violent reaction of feeling came a sense of physical disintegration. A heavy fatigue that weighted his heart and turned his bones to iron followed the brief buoyancy of spirit. Yet he could not rest. He had to walk, to keep in constant movement, to escape some tidal wave which threatened suddenly to engulf his soul. He passed out from the cool shadow of the balcony into the blaze of sunlight and drank in the hot perfume of the flowers. At the end of a path a tall cypress held its black, burnt-out torch high against the sky. Denin went and leaned against it; doubly glad of his loneliness in this refuge he had found, and thankful that none but the trees and flowers of his garden could see him in his weakness and his pain.

The dark cypress he looked up to seemed to have gone through fire and to have triumphed over death. Denin felt a kind of kinship with it, wishing that from the tree and from all nature calmness and strength might pass into his spirit. He imagined

that he could hear the rushing of sap deep under the rough bark. Generations of joys and sorrows had come and gone since the tree was young, and had vanished, leaving no more trace than sun or storm. So it would be with what he was suffering now. The things that mattered in the life of this earth were strength and steadfastness. Denin prayed for them, a voiceless prayer to Nature.

When he grew calmer he walked again, and lifted up his face to the sun. "I'll answer her letter," he thought. It seemed strange to him now, after the shock of what had happened, that when the letters began to come, he had never imagined himself receiving one from Barbara. He had had the book published in order that it might have some chance of reaching her, of helping her; yet the proof that she had been reached and helped had come upon him like a thunderbolt.

Of course he was thankful, now that he put it to himself in such a way. He ought to be almost happy, he tried to think; but he was at the world's end from happiness. A hurricane had swept

through his soul, and it would take him a long time to build up again the miserable little refuge which had been his house of peace. Still, it did n't matter about himself. He would write to Barbara, and give her the assurance she asked for. He was glad now of a whim that had led him to learn typewriting two or three years ago, for he could not trust to disguising his hand so well that she might not recognize it. It was many months since he had practiced typing, but he thought that in a few hours he might again pick up the trick which he could not quite have lost.

Rather than let himself think any longer, he went out at once, walking to the town, where he bought a small typewriter of a new make. Its lettering was in script, which seemed less offensive and coldly businesslike for a letter than print. Back again at the Mirador he tried the machine, and sooner than he had expected the old facility returned. Then he was ready to begin his answer to Barbara; but for a long time he sat with his fingers on the keys, his eyes fixed upon them aimlessly. It was not that he

could find nothing to say. He could find too many things, and too many ways of saying those things. But all were expressions of thoughts which he might not put on paper for Barbara to read.

Even after he began to type, he took page after page out of the machine and tore up each one. Vaguely he felt that the right way was to be laconic; that he ought to show no emotion, lest he should show too much. Finally he finished a few paragraphs which he knew to be lame and halting, like himself, stiff and altogether inadequate. Yet he was sure that he would be able to do no better, and so he determined to send his letter off as it was.

"You say you are grateful to me," Denin began as abruptly as Barbara had begun in writing to him, "but it is for me to be grateful to you really, for speaking as you do of my story, 'The War Wedding.' I am answering your letter the day it has reached me, because you are anxious to have a reply to your question. It is what you wished it might be. I *have* been very near to death, so near that I seemed to see across, to the other side of what *we* think of as a

gulf. If I saw aright, it is not a gulf. . . . Those voices of young men passing suddenly over in crowds, I thought, I believed, and still believe I heard. I can almost hear them now, because one does not forget such things *if one comes back.* I trust this answer may be of some comfort to you; and if you can feel, as you say you will feel, that my book has a message especially for you, I shall be very glad and proud.

"Yours sincerely, John Sanbourne."

When he re-read the typed letter, one point struck him which had not so sharply pierced his intelligence before. The effect of the appeal from Barbara, the miracle of its coming, and the poignant obligation it thrust upon him had been too overpowering at first. He had not stopped, after breaking short his wild hope of her freedom, to dwell on the strangeness of one part of her letter above another. But now, in judging his own phrases, he came to a stop at a sentence towards the end of the page: "I trust this may be of some comfort to you."

"Won't that way of putting it sound conceited?"

he asked himself. But no; she had used that very word "comfort" in her letter. As he remembered this, the thought suddenly woke in him that she had written as a woman might write who was in deep sorrow. Yet she could not be in deep sorrow. She had her heart's desire, and at worst, her feeling for the man who was gone—John Denin—could only be a mild, impersonal grief that his life had to be the price of her happy love.

He had longed, in writing the story of "The War Wedding," to show Barbara why even that mild grief was not needed, because in giving great joy to another soul a woman earned the right to her own happiness. Denin could not bear to think that pity for him might shadow Barbara's sunshine, but he had not dreamed until to-day that the shadow could be dark. Now, the more intently he studied her appeal to the author of the book, the more difficult he found it to understand her state of mind.

Barbara spoke of herself as one of the many women whose "sore hearts" ached for healing because they were losing their "dearest" in battle.

And she said that, if he could give her the assurance she asked for, the story of "The War Wedding" would seem to hold a personal message, making her "future life bearable."

What a generous and sensitive nature she had, and what beautiful loyalty, to mourn sincerely for a man she had never loved, but to whom she owed a few material advantages! It was wonderful of the girl, and he worshiped her for it. His sacrifice for her was easier because of this warm sense of her gratitude, and he kissed the paper he had just written on for her, because some day it would be touched by her hands.

"If I only dared to say more to comfort her, and beg her to be happy!" he thought. But the one safe way had been to make his answer to her calmly impersonal, perhaps even a little cold. For fear he might be seized with an irresistible desire to add something more, something from his heart instead of his head, Denin put the letter into an envelope and sealed it.

Then, however, he stumbled upon a new difficulty

which had not occurred to him before. He was in the act of addressing her as "Lady Denin" (since she chose to keep his name), when his heart stood still in the face of a danger he had barely escaped.

How was a stranger like John Sanbourne to know that she was *Lady* Denin?

If, inadvertently, he had written the name thus, and sent the letter to the post, even so slight a thing might have made her guess the truth. Instead of comforting, he might have plunged her into humiliation and despair.

Barbara had not spoken of herself in the letter as being married. For all John Sanbourne was supposed to know, she might be a girl, mourning a brother or a lover. At last he addressed her as "Mrs. or Miss Denin, Gorston Old Hall." And with several other letters which he forced himself to write, he enclosed the stamped envelope in a note to Eversedge Sibley. "Please post these in New York," he begged. "I don't care to have every one know where I live."

## CHAPTER VIII

IT was the day he finished re-plastering the house-wall, that the celebrity was "discovered" by Santa Barbara.

Denin stood half way up a ladder with a trowel in his hand, when a young man in a Panama hat and a natty suit of gray flannels came swinging jauntily along the path: altogether, a "natty" looking young man. He would probably have chosen the adjective himself.

"Good morning!" he confidently addressed the lanky, shirt-sleeved figure on the ladder. "Do you happen to know if Mr. John Sanbourne is at home?"

"I am John Sanbourne," said Denin, making no move to descend the ladder. He wanted to get on with his work, and expected the newcomer's errand, whatever it might be, would be over and done with in a minute. He thought that the young man had

probably come to sell him an encyclopedia or a sewing machine, because the only other visitors he had had—except the postman, and the boy from the grocer—had pertinaciously urged that the Mirador was incomplete without these objects.

The young man looked horrified for an instant, but being a journalist and used to rude shocks, he was able hastily to marshal his features and bring them stiffly to attention. He had already learned that the Mirador's new owner was "peculiar," a sort of hermit whom nobody called on, because he did his own work, wore shabby clothes, and made no pretense of having social eminence. Indeed, it had never occurred to any one (until the idea jumped into the reporter's brilliant brain) that a person who could buy and inhabit that half ruined "doll's house" could be of importance in the outside world. The journalist it was who, happening to meet the postman near the Drake place that morning, saw a huge envelope addressed to "John Sanbourne." He flashed out an eager question: "Is there a John Sanbourne living near here?" He was answered:

"Yes, a fellow by that name 's bought the Mirador"; quickly elicited a few further details, and, abandoning another project, arrived when the postman was out of the way, at the Mirador gate. It was a blow—severe if not fatal—to romance to find John Sanbourne splashed with whitewash and looking as a self-respecting mason would be ashamed to look. But perhaps he was a socialist. That would at least make an interesting paragraph.

"Are you *the* John Sanbourne, the man who wrote 'The War Wedding'?" the visitor persisted.

Denin was surprised and disconcerted. "Why do you ask?" he sharply answered one question with another; then added, still more sharply, "And who are you?"

"My name 's Reid. I work for a San Francisco paper, and I 'm correspondent for one in New York. If you wrote the book that 's made such a wonderful boom, my papers want to get a story about you."

"Thank you. That 's very kind of you and of them," said Denin coolly. "But I have n't a 'story'

worth any newspaper's getting. I 'm sorry you should give yourself trouble in vain. Yet so it must be."

"When I say 'a story,' I mean an article—an interview," Reid explained to the amateur intelligence. "I think," he went on, beginning to find possibilities in the hermit and his surroundings (voice with charm in it: fine eyes: striking height: peculiar fad for solitude, etc.)—"I think I see my way to something pretty good."

"I 'm afraid," Denin insisted, speaking with great civility, because he had suffered too much to inflict the smallest pin-prick of pain upon any living thing if it could be avoided. "I 'm afraid I must ask you not to rout me out of my burrow with any search-light. You can see for yourself I 'm no figure for a newspaper paragraph. If the public really takes the slightest interest in me, for Heaven's sake leave them to their illusions. Please write nothing about me at all. But I can't let you go without asking you to rest and drink a glass of lemonade. I 'm ashamed to confess"—and he laughed—"that I 've

nothing stronger to offer you. I lead the simple life here!"

As he spoke he came down from the ladder, trying not to show inhospitable reluctance, and invited the reporter to sit in the shade of the veranda. Reid, seeing that the man was in earnest, not merely "playing to the gallery," showed his shrewd journalistic qualities by acquiescence. He accepted the situation and the lemonade, and kept his eyes open. He did not abuse the hermit's kindness by outstaying his welcome, but took leave at the end of fifteen or twenty minutes. At the gate, he held out his hand and Sanbourne had to shake it with a good grace. Noticing for future reference, that the author of "The War Wedding" had a hand as attractive as his scarred face was plain, Reid said resignedly, "Well, Mr. Sanbourne, thank you for entertaining me. But I 'm sorry you don't want me to write about you. Sure you won't change your mind?"

"Sure," echoed Sanbourne, and went thankfully back to put the last touches on the house-wall. About half an hour later the work was finished,

and he had time to remember that several letters and papers, brought by the postman, were lying unopened. Standing on his ladder, he had asked to have the budget left on the balcony table. Then he had forgotten it, for he dreaded rather than looked forward to the letters of his unknown correspondents; and even if Barbara acknowledged his answer (which seemed to him unlikely) it would be many days before he could expect to hear from her.

This time there was the usual fat envelope, stuffed with smaller ones, forwarded by Eversedge Sibley; also there was a letter from Sibley himself. Denin put off delving into the big envelope, and opened Sibley's. Quite a friendship had developed between them, and he liked hearing from the publisher, who wrote about the great events of the world or advised the reading of certain new books, which he generally sent in a separate package. Sometimes he sent newspapers, too, fancying that Sanbourne saw only the local ones. They were having a discussion through the post, the American trying to instruct the Englishman in the intricacies of

home politics; but the letter which Denin now opened did not refer to that subject, nor did it finish with the usual appeal: "When will the call to work get hold of you again, or when will the spirit move you to think of writing me another book?"

"Dear Sanbourne," Sibley began. "This is an interlude, to the air of 'Money Musk'! Our custom, as you may vaguely have noticed in the contract I forced you to sign, is to make royalty payments to our authors twice a year. But you have bought a house and land, and Heaven knows what all, out of your advance, you tell me. Seems to me you can't have left yourself much margin. You mentioned the first day we met that you were a poor man; so I have unpleasant visions of what our latest star author may have reduced himself to, while the men whose job it is to sell his masterpiece are piling up dollars for his publishers. The check I lay between these pages (so as to break it to you gently) is only a small part of what we know the 'Wedding' to have made up to date. Never in all my experience has a book advertised *itself* as yours seems to have done. One

reader tells a dozen others to buy it. Each one of that dozen spreads the glad tidings among his or her own dozen. So it goes! The 'Wedding' has now been out three months and is in its tenth edition, the last six whacking big ones. It won't stop short of at least a million, I bet, with Canada, England, and the Colonies as well as our immense public here. With this assurance, you can afford to use the present check as pin money. Yours ever, E. S."

Denin turned the page, and saw a folded slip of yellow paper: a check payable to John Sanbourne for two thousand five hundred dollars.

He thought no more about the journalist. But the journalist was busily thinking about him. Mr. Reid was not writing an "interview" with Mr. Sanbourne, because he had promised he would not do that. Sanbourne had, luckily for Reid, let his request stop there. Reid considered himself morally free to write something else, which did not compose itself on the lines of an interview. He wrote what he called "A Study of John Sanbourne, Author and Hermit," making it as photographic, yet at the same

time as picturesque, as he knew how. Just as an "artist photographer" takes dramatic advantage of high lights and shadows, so did Reid the reporter put to their best use the splashes of whitewash on his celebrity's black hair and scarred brown face, and spots of pink paint on his shirt sleeves. He described the Mirador as it had been after the fire, and as it had become since John Sanbourne bought the little ruined "doll house" with its patch of garden walled off from the Drake (once the Fay) place, near Santa Barbara. He mentioned his own surprise at finding so famous a man voluntarily hidden from the world, in these quaint surroundings, when, if he chose, he could be fêted by "everybody who was anybody" for miles around.

When Reid had finished his "study," he was as proud of it as his victim was of the plaster and paint on the Mirador walls. It was too good, thought the journalist, for a local paper. Why, it was a regular "scoop"! He would send it "on spec." to the *New York Comet* which occasionally accepted an article from him. This, he had no doubt, would not only

be accepted but snapped at, for the great Sunday supplement which the *Comet* brought out. In that case, he would get a good price for his work, far better than local pay, to say nothing of the kudos; and as a queer fish like Sanbourne was n't likely to "run to" the Sunday *Comet*, or to a press-cutting subscription, he would probably never see the "stuff." This thought relieved Reid of his one anxiety. Sanbourne had trusted him. And the difference between an "interview" and a "study" was perhaps too subtle for an outsider to understand.

As it happened, Mr. Reid was right in all three of his suppositions. The New York *Comet* did approve his manuscript: theirs was a dignified cross between accepting and snapping. John Sanbourne did not see the Sunday supplement, nor did he take in any of the many newspapers which quoted it. He did not subscribe to a press-cutting bureau; and the agencies which had applied for his patronage, being discouraged by his silence, did not send to him.

Eversedge Sibley, on the other hand, always saw the Sunday supplement of the *Comet*, which special-

ized on literary subjects. He read the "Study of John Sanbourne, Author and Hermit," and was astonished that so retiring, almost mysterious a person, had granted it. On further deliberation, however, Sibley decided that material for the article must have been got on false pretenses. He read the "stuff" through again, and felt that, though interesting to the public, Sanbourne would think it hateful. If a journalist had caught him unawares, he would be distressed to find his privacy so violated; and Eversedge Sibley did not want Sanbourne to be distressed. Consequently he did not forward the supplement, nor the cutting his firm afterwards received of it; and as no one else thought of sending, Sanbourne continued peacefully to forget his morning visit from a journalist. Even the fact that he was stared at in the street more intently than he had been at first, when an errand took him into town, did not remind him of the call or cause him to put two and two together. He did not indeed know that he was being stared at. He did not look much at people, because he did not wish to be looked at. And his

thoughts were more for the place and the scenery which Barbara had loved and he was learning to love than for his fellow creatures, who seemed infinitely remote from him.

"How wonderful that that John Sanbourne who wrote 'The War Wedding' should be here, and none of us even dare try to get to know him!" some women said, when they had seen extracts from Reid's "study" in newspapers they took in. These women thought Sanbourne's scars actually attractive. Others announced that they did n't believe the man *was* the real John Sanbourne. There must be some mistake. *This* one did n't look like a gentleman. At least his clothes did n't. And *anybody* could pretend to be John Sanbourne if they liked. Lots of frauds did that sort of thing when a novel by an unknown author made a great success.

John Sanbourne felt richer with his new check and the astonishing prospect held out by Sibley than Sir John Denin had ever felt at Gorston Old Hall with his big income. But his one extravagance was to buy some books and shelves to put them on. In

that way he soon collected all his old, best friends around him; for that was the one joy of having books for friends. No matter where you went, you could always send for them and have them with you. You could never be entirely alone in the world.

When the time came that Denin might receive a letter from Barbara, he tried not to think of it. He said to himself that he knew it would not come, that he ought not to want it to come, that if it did come, it would only prolong the agony. He read hard, and worked hard in the garden, and took long walks, though he limped slightly still, for he was losing the worst of his lameness and might actually hope to become in the end (as the German surgeon had prophesied) as "good a man as he had ever been." Perhaps in some ways—ways of the mind and spirit—he was better. But there was no soul-doctor to judge of such improvement. Certainly Denin was unable to do so himself.

Nothing on earth or in heaven could distract his thoughts from the letter, however, when it began to loom before him as a possibility. Constantly he

found himself saying, "To-morrow it might come." And then, "To-day."

When it was "to-day," he began courageously to plan an excursion which for some time he had been meaning to make. If he left early in the morning—long before the postman was due—he need not get back till night. But his strength failed at the moment of starting. He went no farther than the gate. *Should* there be a letter while he was away, the postman must leave it on the table outside the house, for the door would be locked. Then, Denin argued, if any mischievous person should slip in and steal it, he would never know what he had missed. And he was rewarded for staying. The letter did come. It was only when he held it in his hand that he realized how desperately he had wanted it, what a black dungeon the beautiful summer day of sunshine would have been without it.

"Thank you more than I can say for answering me!" he read. "You wrote me on the very day you had my letter, and I am doing the same with yours, for it has just arrived. Now, since you have told

me you *heard the voices with the ears of your own spirit*, the book can be mine—my own message, meant for me. Perhaps others say this very same thing to you—though it seems that no one can need such a message as much as I need it. I wonder if it would be wrong to tell you why?

"Maybe your first thought when I ask that question, will be—why should I *want* to tell you? But if I do tell you, then you will see why. We are strangers to each other, living thousands of miles apart, and we shall never meet; yet because you have written this book, I feel that you are my friend. You have helped me as no one else could. And I have no one else to help me at all—*no one.*

"Yes, I must tell you!—for in one way I and the girl in your story have lived through the same experience. Only there is one great difference between us. She did n't love the man she married, and that hurt her, in thinking of him afterwards when he was dead. I loved the man I married so much that it is killing me because I did n't tell him. There was a reason why I did n't tell. It seemed then that

I could not. But oh, do you, who know so much, think he understands now, and does he still care, or is he too far away? Could he understand my having done a thing since he went, a thing that looks like disloyalty—treason—to his memory, though indeed it was not that. It was done to save a life. You will say, 'This is a mad woman who asks me such questions.' But I almost wish I were mad. If I were, I might n't realize how I suffer. Yours—Barbara Denin."

He was stunned by the letter, and its revelation. She had *loved him.*

## CHAPTER IX

THE thought filled the man's soul and surrounded it as water fills and surrounds a ring fallen into the sea. Barbara had loved him. There was nothing in the world outside that thought.

At first, it caught him up to heaven, and then just as he saw the light, it flung him down to hell.

Fool that he had been, never to see the truth under her reserve, while seeing would have meant standing by her, keeping her forever! But he had let her go, and it was too late now, even for explanations. He had shut an iron door between them; and standing with her on the other side of that door was a man who called her his wife. There was the situation; and he, by his silence, had created it. He was condemned to perpetual silence; for it was the wildest, most hopeless mockery of all which brought to John Sanbourne a knowledge of Barbara's love for John Denin.

Fate had been laughing at him while he wrote his book with a message of peace for her, laughing wicked and cruel laughter, because through the message he was to come into touch with Barbara and learn the tragic failure of his sacrifice. That seemed to Denin a vile trick for life to play upon a man, and whipped by the seven devils of thwarted love which had entered into him he cursed it; cursed life and fate, himself and Trevor d'Arcy, and was ready to deny Justice, even Justice blindfolded.

His heaven lasted for a moment at best. For many hours Cain and Abel in him fought each other in hell. But he had been down in depths well nigh as black, and had struggled out to the light. Remembering this, he struggled out once more, at last, and perceived that, somehow, to his own wondering surprise, he had stumbled up to a higher level and a stronger footing than before. Within distant sight he visioned those serene mountain tops where light is, the light that never shines on sea or land for those who have not suffered.

Only a short time ago he had begun daily to real-

ize and tell himself that strength and steadfastness alone really mattered; that suffering was but a flame which passed. This was still true, as true as it had ever been. A man could choose whether the flame should consume or purify him in its passing; and here and now the immediate hour of his choice was on the stroke. At the end of that day of turmoil, Denin seemed still to be looking down at himself, as a crouching prisoner in a dark underground cell. Yet he knew that he was his own prisoner, not really a helpless captive of the Fate he had cursed. Fate had no power after all to make men prisoners. It was their business to find this out, and to prove that they had only to release themselves, in order to be free. He felt this to be an abstract fact of life; and if he meant to live he must make it concrete.

The underground hole where he so miserably crouched was but the cellar of his darkest self. If he but thought so, he had strength enough in him to fight his way up into the high, bright tower which was also himself, a tower with a wide view on every side, over the sunlit mountains from whose

peaks he could already catch some glimmering vision.

Even the thought of the mountain tops—that they were there, shining, and always had been and always would be—made Denin lift his head and draw deep breaths into his lungs. That part of him which had yearned to write the book for Barbara and had conquered difficulties to write it, came like a strong brother to the rescue of a weak brother and pulled him up by main force out of the dark. He tried to reassure himself, over and over, that he need never again crawl back into the darkness. He had seen the view from the tower, and the tower was his to reach.

Denin had not worked out for his own guidance any clear-cut philosophy of life. He had just stumbled along with strength for his goal mark, trying now and then to recall some whisper or note of music he had caught from the other side before he came back. He had written down in his book, for Barbara, all that had been tangible under his pen. But now, knowing she had loved him, he saw how much more help she needed than he had given,

and how much more—how very much more—he owed her.

Not that he had deliberately stood aside and left the girl unprotected. When in the German hospital he had drifted back to a knowledge of realities past and present, he had seen almost at once that, even if the news were unwelcome, he must not let his wife live in ignorance that she was still bound. It was only after hearing from Severne of Barbara's marriage to d'Arcy, that he had said, "John Denin is dead and buried, and his ghost laid." He had meant to make the supreme sacrifice for Barbara's good, and there had been no shadow of doubt in his mind that he was right in making it. Now he asked himself if even then it might not have been best to let the truth come out. No one was to blame for the mistake in a dead man's identity, nor for what had happened afterwards through that mistake. Barbara would have had a hard choice before her; yet she might, if she possessed strength and courage enough, have chosen from the two men who had come into her life, the one she loved. The whole

world would have rung with the tragic story, but at the end Barbara might have lived down the tragedy. If he had been her choice, he would have helped her to live it down, by the gift of such love as no man had ever given to a woman.

As it was, he had dared to play the potter. He had taken the clay of Barbara's destiny into his own awkward hands, to shape it as he thought best, and he had let the vase break in the furnace. He could never make it what, but for his meddling, it might have been; yet he must piece the delicate fragments together if he could, not caring for—not thinking of—his bleeding hands.

This, then, was the debt Denin owed to Barbara. And to pay it he saw that he must begin by remaking himself, before he could give her anything worth the having. He must become a thing of value, in order to be of value to her. Those faint whispers and snatches of music from the other side of the hidden river, which he had jumbled into "The War Wedding," confusedly, hurriedly, fearing to lose their echoes, he must now carefully gather up again

and sort out with method. He must dip into his brain where half-remembered thoughts seethed in solution. He must see the rainbow in every tear drop, and crystallize it into a jewel for Barbara. Thus developing himself, he might have some worthy offering for her at last.

He could not write that day, nor the next, for it seemed that the only things worth saying were the things which would not let themselves be said, things which swept through the background of his mind like a flight of chiming bells in the night, elusive as waiting souls for which no bodies have yet been made. But though he could not write, he called thoughts, which he had once seen and let go, to come again to him. He sent himself back along the road he had traveled beyond the milestones. He searched by the wayside for beautiful memories he had dropped there, and some of them he found grown up tall and white as lilies in moonlight. Whatever he found was for Barbara.

On the third night after the revelation, he had gathered something to give her, and strength enough

to feel sure he would not put into his letter the question which must not be asked: "What was the reason you could n't tell your husband that you loved him?"

Denin wrote with a typewriter, as he had written before, on blank paper with no address, because it was better for Barbara to come in touch with him only through his publishers. In that way, she would be spared any sense of constraint she might have to feel in knowing that he lived among her neighbors of long ago. She had given him her name frankly, and she might fear some inadvertent mention of it to people she had met as a child. If he were to be of real use to her, he thought, he must be known only as a distant Voice, an Ear, a Sympathy, almost impersonal outside his letters.

Denin wrote to her that he was sure, entirely sure, the man she loved was "not too far away to know."

"You will only have to send him a thought, and it must reach him behind that very thin wall we call death. The way I imagine it, such a message goes where it 's directed, just as when we call 'Central'

through the telephone. They, whom we speak of as dead, have their own work to do and their own life to live, so perhaps they don't think of us every moment. But surely we've only to call. They may not see us in the flesh, any more than we can see them in the spirit; but it came to me when I was very close to the other side, that our bodies don't enclose us quite. We're half-open jewel-boxes, that let out flashes of emerald, or sapphire, or diamond light, according to the strength of our vibrations—or aspirations, if you like (I begin to realize that these are much the same thing!). It is the flashes of light which are seen and recognized by the ones who have passed farther on. The lights are our images, as well as messages for them. But when I say 'farther on,' it's only a figure of speech. They are not far off.

"We can see the rain. We can't see the wind, even when it is so close we can lean on it like a wall. And so we can lean on their love, strong as a wall, stronger than anything visible to us, because love is the strongest thing there is. You see, life would n't

be worth living for any of us—it would n't have been worth creating—if the dead really died. The glory of the deathless dead lights our way, with the bright deeds they have done, till we come where we can see for ourselves that there 's no dividing line. 'The milestones end.' That 's all. They 're not needed any more.

"I heard other people talking of these things when I went where the milestones end. Since then I 've wondered why I did n't know the things before. *Listen to your hopes*, and *you* can know without waiting; because hope is the voice of instinctive knowledge, and soul-instinct is what we were *born* knowing. Believe this, and you won't have to stumble slowly up, as I did, with a hod full of old precepts on my back. You can plane down from the sky with your arms full of stars, and live with them, as I live with the flowers in my garden.

"The accident which put me into close touch with what we call 'death,' put me out of touch—mentally—with life on this side for a while. An operation brought me back. Just as, hovering between the

known and the unknown, I let my past drop, so on my return to it I had for a while no memories of the borderland. My brain busied itself picking up lost threads. I recalled the instant when I thought I was meeting death: a great shock when all supports fell away as from under a ship that is launched, and I plunged into measureless depths. Beyond that sensation, there was blankness. By and by glimpses of something bright came and went, oftenest in dreams. The effort to seize their meaning waked me with a start. It is only now that I am beginning to hold some of the best meanings, I think. I have come back with a little star-dust, even I; and by its glimmer, in good moments, I try to interpret my own dreams.

"If I read them rightly, I've told you only an old, old truth in saying that there should be no such word as death, or grief for it among the living. We've only to lift the veil of Death to see the face of Life—a wonderful, shining face with no pain in its smile. Looking into its eyes, what we do, instead of 'dying,' is to flow over our own narrow limi-

tations as growing vines flow over the high wall of a little garden. We escape out of bounds into the boundless and are part of it.

"Don't, then, let the life of the man you have loved be darkened by feeling that he has darkened yours. Stand up, lift your head, and you 'll see how your sorrow will have to lie down at your feet as shadows lie."

When Denin ended his letter, he found that in trying to help Barbara, he had helped and heartened himself. He had unfolded a flag and waved it to the sky.

He went out, though it was after midnight, and posted the letter. Later, he was able to sleep as he had not slept since the night he wrote the last words of his book. As usual he dreamed of Barbara, but this time it was a new dream. He saw himself painting her portrait; and when he waked in the sunrise he wondered why he had never tried to paint such a likeness from memory. He could see her as clearly before him as though she had come to the door, opened it, and looked at him.

The thought gave him something more to live for. He would do the picture, and so bring Barbara herself to the Mirador where, guessing nothing of the truth, she sent her thoughts to John Sanbourne.

## CHAPTER X

IT seemed to Denin that he knew the day and even the moment when his letter reached Barbara.

He was working on her portrait, to which he gave every instant of his spare time between dawn and dusk. A strange, elusive impression of a girl it was; a girl in white looking through a half-open door. She stood in shadow, but leaning forward a little so that her eyes and hair and a long fold of her dress caught the light. Denin's portrait work before had been done with charcoal or colored chalk. Such mediums were too crude, however, for this labor of his love. He was trying pastels, and had expected to make many false starts and failures. But he had only to open the door to see the girl standing just outside, looking straight at him with smoke-blue eyes under level brows and warm shadow of copper-beech hair; so after all he could not go wrong with his

work. He had but to paint what he saw, and the picture took life quickly, as his book had taken life, because it was easier to go on than to stop. One evening, he was straining his eyes for the last ray of daylight, when a blue flash seemed to leap from the eyes of the portrait. He could hardly believe that it was only an illusion of an overworked optic nerve. It was as if Barbara had somehow found out about the portrait, and compelled it to speak for her, to tell him something she wished to say.

"She has got the letter!" was the thought that compelled his mind to accept it. And then—"She will answer at once."

The difference in time between Santa Barbara and Gorston Old Hall was about twelve hours; and fifteen days ago, he had posted his letter. It was just possible, even in war-time delays, that it had reached her, he calculated, as the eyes of the portrait held him spellbound.

When the picture was finished, he took its measurements and ordered a glass to protect the fragile colors, delicate as the microscopic plumes of a moth's

wing. But ne could not content himself with any design for a frame. He went to shop after shop, and even traveled as far as Los Angeles, in the hope of finding the right thing. But nothing was right as a frame for Barbara. The handsomer a frame was, the more conventional and banal it looked in Denin's eyes, when he tried to associate it with her. At last he decided to carve out the frame with his own hands, from the beautiful fluted redwood of the great sequoias of California: wonderful, ruddy wood with an auburn sheen and a wave running through it like that of Barbara's hair.

The idea seized him and brought extraordinary delight. He took three lessons from an astonished cabinet-maker of whom he was able to buy the redwood, and then with confidence and joy began his work. In two days it was finished, and the picture in place. It was almost as if he had built a house for Barbara, and she had come to live in it, and look out of the door at him.

The portrait was half life-size; and rimmed in its rich fluted setting of redwood a thousand years old,

it was of exactly the right length and shape to hang on the door of child-Barbara's bedroom—his bedroom now. It was for that place he had planned it, because in these days he had lost the unbroken privacy of his first weeks at the Mirador. John Sanbourne had been "discovered," and without churlishness was unable to remain any longer a hermit. He went nowhere, except for the long, solitary walks he loved, and refused all invitations, but he could not lock his gate against the three or four kindly persons who ventured with the best intentions, to "dig him up" and "keep him from being lonely." His memory-portrait of Barbara was too strikingly like her, in its strange impressionist way, not to be in danger of recognition by some old acquaintance of her childhood. Besides, a picture of his love, even if unrecognized, was far too sacred to be seen by stranger eyes. In Denin's bedroom the smiling visitant was safe. No one but himself ever went there. And with the heavy frame firmly clamped to the door panels, the effect of the girl gazing out into the room was thrillingly intensified for Denin.

Thus hung, the portrait was opposite his camp bed; and when he waked at sunrise, Barbara and he looked at each other.

The picture had been in its place for a day when her letter came, a very thick letter; and with the envelope uncut he went up to sit before her likeness and read what she had to say to John Sanbourne.

"You are a lifeline thrown to me!" he read. "I grasp it thankfully. I wonder if you will think me a silly, sentimental creature, if I tell you that even before I opened your letter a strong golden current seemed to come out through the envelope into my fingers, and up my arm? If you were just an ordinary friend, a man, living near me, I should n't be able to say this to you, or tell you that I put your letter like a talisman inside my dress, so as to keep it near me, and not lose the sense of its influence after I had read it three times over. But to *you* at your distance I can tell many things that are sacred, because I 'm only a shadow to you, not a flesh-and-blood woman, with all my faults and foolishnesses under your eyes to be judged. I 'm a shadow to

you, and I don't mind being a shadow, because it gives me freedom and liberty. Yet I must n't abuse that liberty, and deceive you, my friend so far off—and so near. I 'm afraid that I have deceived you already, and asked for your sympathy, your help, under false pretenses. Perhaps if you 'd known the real truth about me and my life, you would have written me a terribly different letter. Whenever I am feeling the comfort of it most, suddenly that thought pierces through me, very cold and deadly, like a spear of ice. I *want* the comfort—oh, how I want it!—and so, to make sure whether I have the right to take it or not, I am going to tell you everything. You will not be bored, or think me egotistic. I know you well enough, through your book and your letters, to be sure of that. When you have read this, you will be able to judge whether I can dare to claim the consolation you offer me, and whether I have a right to comfort myself with those thoughts, about the only man I have loved or shall ever love. Because, I have given another man a place in my outer life.

"What thought comes into your mind when you read those words—cold-hearted, horrible, disloyal words? Do you slam the door of your sympathy in my face, and turn me away? No, please, please don't do that—anyhow don't do it quite yet. Wait till I 've explained as well as I can—if any explanation is possible.

"I want you to know all the truth and understand entirely, so I must even tell you a thing that seems absurd to tell. It would be absurd, if it were not for the thing's consequences. When I was fourteen my mother and I came away from America, where we 'd lived ever since I was born, came to live in Paris, though she is English by birth. A cousin of hers, an officer in the British army, was on leave from his regiment just then. He ran over to Paris, to amuse himself, not to see us; but as he knew we were there, he called. He was twenty-seven—thirteen years older than I—and I thought he was like all the heroes of all the novels I 'd ever read, in the form of one perfectly handsome, perfectly fascinating man. He treated me like a child, and

teased me a little about being a 'flapper,' but that only made me look up to him more, because he seemed so high above me, and wonderful and unattainable, like a prince.

"Perhaps he saw how I felt, and gloried in it as great fun. He gave me his picture in uniform, and I worshiped it humbly, as a little Eastern girl might worship an idol. Soon he went to India, but I saw him once again, nearly two years afterwards, when I was almost sixteen. I had never forgotten my 'prince,' and after he came back he flirted with me —rather cruelly, I think. When I realized—just as he was saying good-by, that he 'd only been playing a little, it all but broke my heart—what I thought was my heart. I used actually to *enjoy* being miserable, and telling myself I should never love again—just as if I 'd been a grown-up woman. I was even angry with my frivolous self when I found that I was getting over it. For I did get over it very soon, and before I was seventeen I could look back and laugh at my childish silliness. That was

over five years ago, for I am twenty-two now; and all my real life has come since then.

"My mother and I were poor, until a little while ago. She is very good really and very charming, and absolutely unselfish, so I 'm not picking flaws in her if I have to explain to you that she was selfish for *me*. Being English herself, she has always thought—in spite of marrying an American and going to live in America—that there 's nothing quite so good in the world as the best kind of English life. By the 'best kind,' she means life among the aristocracy, in country houses, and in London in the season. She made up her mind before I was eighteen that she wanted me some day to marry a man who could give me just that life. I used to laugh then, when she mapped out my future. It seemed only funny, not vulgar and horrid to talk about marrying some vague, imaginary man for his title and money; but when Mother took a house in London—a better house than we could afford—and went into debt to buy me heaps of lovely clothes, and

fussed and schemed to get me presented and dragged into the 'right set,' I began to be ashamed.

"Before we had been in London very long I met a man who was different from any one I had ever seen before. From the first night, when we were introduced at a dance, I could think about no one else. I wish I could make you understand what he was like, for then you would see how a woman who cared about him could never stop caring, even when he was dead; for no other man could at all take his place. He was n't handsome, not even what people would call 'good looking,' I suppose, and he did n't talk very much. But somehow, when he came into a room with lots of other men in it, all the rest simply ceased to count. He was very tall, and a great athlete. Maybe that was one thing that pleased a woman, for we do like strength—we can't help it. But there was so much more about him, magnetic and sincere and splendid, which would somehow have made one feel that he was near, if one were *blind!* He could do all the things other men do better than any of the others, yet he had thoughts

such as none of the others had. One knew that a woman could have no moods or imaginings beyond his power to understand, if he cared enough, because he was *fine*—'fine' in the French meaning of the word—as well as strong. I shall never forget the first time he looked at me. We had just been introduced. There was something wonderful about his eyes—I could hardly tell you what it was. But one suddenly felt caught and drawn into them, as into a vortex in deep, still water, clear and pure, though dark.

"I saw that he rather liked me, and even that meant a good deal from him, because he was a man's man, and did n't care much about laughing and talking with lots of girls. Perhaps he was shy of them. Mother saw, too, that he was interested; and that was what began all the trouble, because he was exactly what she had set her heart on for me. She would n't leave him alone to make up his mind whether he really wanted to see more of me or not. She tried to *force* him to want me. She did all she could to bring us together. She left no stone unturned. To

me it was sickening. I don't know whether he saw it or not, but I was so afraid he might, and be disgusted with us both, that it made me feel absolutely ill. I could never be at ease with him. It was hateful, hateful that he should think my mother and I were trying to 'catch' him, because of his title and money, and his beautiful old house which every one admired and talked about, and heaps of women wanted.

"After we had known him for awhile, mother hinted and hinted for us to be invited to stay at his place. It was almost like asking him to marry me —at least I felt it was. He was obliged to get up a house-party for us, so that we should n't be alone, for he had no mother or aunt or any one to entertain for him. We and the others were invited for a week, but the day everybody was going on somewhere else, mother was taken ill, so she and I had to stay. I was sure she was pretending, though she would n't confess, and I was almost wild with misery and shame, I loved him so *dreadfully*.

"For days mother kept her room, and when she

came down she seemed so weak, that of course he begged us not to think of going. A fortnight more passed like that. Then the first rumors of war began; and we were still with him when war was declared. That same day, out in a garden by a lake we both loved, he told me he *cared*, and asked if I would marry him before he went off to fight. If only I could have been sure that he did really care, and had n't been drawn on by things mother had said, I should have been divinely happy. But I was n't sure. I was n't at all sure. And the shame and suffering I felt, and the fear of showing that I adored the ground he walked on, when perhaps he was only being chivalrous to me, made me behave like a *beast*. I was just a sullen lump. I said yes, I would marry him, if he was quite, quite sure he wanted me to; and then mother came out of the house, and straight to us, as if she had known exactly what was going on and could hardly wait to make certain of him.

"He had to go so soon, to rejoin his old regiment, and leave for the front, that he got a special license,

and we were married when we had been engaged just two days. If he did love me—and looking back I almost believe now that he did, for he was too true as well as strong to be 'trapped' by any woman—I must have hurt him by keeping him so at a distance. He could n't have understood, not even with the wonderful power he had of seeing deep into people, all the way through to their souls. But now I have explained to you about mother, *you* will understand. We were hardly alone together, he and I, for more than five minutes at a time. I always made some excuse to escape. I was afraid if I were with him for long I should break down and be a fool. And I thought if he did n't love me I should certainly disgust him by crying. Mother had told me often, when she was training me to 'come out' in society, that a man must love a woman *very* much, not to be irritated with her when she cries, and her face crinkles up and her nose gets red.

"After our wedding he was with me for about an hour, but mother was with us too, for half the time, and even when she left us alone in an ostenta-

tious sort or way, I could think of nothing to say to him, nothing at all. There were a thousand things in my brain, will-o'-the-wisp things, but my tongue could not catch up with them. I let him go. And then it was too late.

"Three weeks afterwards, he died, saving the life of a friend. So now you see what your book meant to me, very specially, and why I begged you to tell me whether you had found out these wonderful things by going down close to death yourself. You know why it was n't enough even when you answered as you did at first. I longed to hear whether you thought *he* would know the truth about me. Your answer to that question is all I hoped for, and more. But I don't deserve it, for I am married now to my cousin—the one I so childishly made an idol of when I was a little girl.

"You are shocked. You think of me with horror. You are sorry you have troubled with me at all. When you read at the beginning of this letter that I had given another man a 'place in my life,' you did n't dream that I had *married him.* But

so it is. Eight months after my love died, and my youth died with him, I was my cousin's wife.

"I won't tell you much about that. Only this: a month after I was a widow, this cousin came to England, wounded. My mother and I were helping the nurses as best we knew how, in the private hospital of a friend. My cousin arranged to be sent there. He was n't seriously hurt, and we saw something of him, of course. He was immensely changed from the old days. Because he might have been a stick or a stone instead of a man for all I cared, he was piqued, I suppose. He told mother that he meant to make me fall in love with him and marry him when the war was over. And when he had gone back to the front again, she repeated what he had said to me. You see, she did n't know how I had loved *the other*, so she was surprised at the way I took the message. I could n't help showing that I was angry because he had *dared*. He wrote to me later, more than once, but I did n't answer his letters.

"Months afterwards, he was horribly wounded.

As he had no near relatives, he asked to have us sent for, to Boulogne. He was supposed to be dying, and we could n't refuse to go. We never thought of refusing. It seemed to do him good to see us, and he grew better. His one wish, he said, was to die in England. We brought him back—a dreadful journey. He grew worse again on the way, and we were obliged to stop at Folkestone for two weeks. Then we got him to London, to see a great specialist for spinal operations. The surgeon said that such an operation as would have to be made —if any—might kill, and could not cure. At best, if he lived, my cousin would be an invalid for the rest of his life. Still, without an operation, he must surely die. It would be just a question of a few weeks. My cousin had to be told this by some one, and the surgeon thought the news of such a verdict had better be broken to him by a person he cared for. Mother felt unable to bear the strain, after all she had gone through. She is n't strong, and since last August she has changed very much. It seems as if, now that I 'm 'provided for' (as she says), she had

let herself go. That day, when she asked if I would tell my cousin what the surgeon said, I was frightened about her, she trembled so much and suddenly turned so deathly pale, with bluish lips, and blue circles round her eyes. Without an instant's hesitation I promised to speak to my cousin. But I did n't realize what the scene would be like, or I could hardly have faced it. In his weakness he broke down, as I never saw any one else break down. He said, if there was no hope of his being made into a man again, what good would it bring him to be cut up and hacked about by a surgeon? Besides, the specialist was the most expensive operator in England, and he could n't afford such a costly experiment. The simplest thing would be to put a revolver to his head, or take an overdose of some sleeping draft, and so to be out of his misery once and for all.

"I was unnerved, and begged him to keep up hope and courage—not to think about the money, but to let us lend it. My beloved one left everything to me; and I was sure, if he were alive, he would wish

me to make that offer to a brother soldier. I felt, even while I was speaking, that if *I* were in my cousin's place, I should refuse the operation because I 'd rather die than live on as a helpless invalid, a burden to myself and others. But it would n't have been *human* not to encourage that poor sufferer to endure existence, if he could. So I tried my best, and I was very excited and worked up by the sight of his emotion. Suddenly he spoke again. He said that without an incentive to live, he would n't trouble about the operation, and the only incentive he could possibly have would be my marrying him, before he went under the anesthetic. Besides, he could n't accept money from me, when he saw no way of repaying it, unless I were his wife. I would rather he had killed me than force me to make such a decision as that!

"Perhaps if I 'd been calmer, I might have dared to refuse, realizing that his love of life was very strong indeed, and that when he had thought things over, he would surely consent to the operation without the horrible sacrifice he asked of me. But I was

at the point of breaking down, myself. I could n't see anything clearly. It seemed to me that I had to save a life, if it could be saved, at any cost. And then, my future mattered so little to me then. The thought in my mind at the time was, that to be the nurse of a broken soldier who 'd given himself for his country, was at least a mission in life. As it was, I had none left. Also, it may be that deep down under my conscious thought was another: that according to the surgeon's expert opinion, my cousin was most unlikely to live. Why not give him the incentive he asked for, to face the ordeal, and let him die happy—since that one thing seemed to mean happiness for him? Almost before I knew what I was doing, I promised. Then it was sprung upon me the next day, that if the operation were to be done at all, it must be done soon. I had to keep my word. And what followed was a nightmare: a second wedding by special license, a bedside marriage with a dying man, words of farewell, and the surgeon and anesthetist arriving in their white robes—like undertakers.

"When I heard that he had come through the operation with his life, I knew instantly what wicked hope must have been hiding in my heart. A sickening disappointment crept like poison through my blood. I had to do my duty, though, and live up to the obligations I 'd undertaken so recklessly. After a few weeks, mother and I brought the invalid home —to the home my beloved one had given me! My life seems to have been one long series of mistakes, but I don't think I 've sinned enough to deserve the punishment I have to endure now. It is too much for me. How am I to bear it, and keep my soul's honor? The memory of my love, his ways, and his looks follow me from room to room of his house, and walk with me by the dear lake, and in the garden paths. I might have found peace if I 'd left myself a right to live with that memory. But I have n't. I 've put a man in *his* place, a man whose body is helpless as that of a little child, yet whose soul is a giant of hateful jealousy. He is jealous of the dead. I had n't guessed a man could be like that. I must tell you no more. I must try not to

be cruel or utterly disloyal both to living and dead —and to my own self-respect, such as I have left.

"I have kept my love's name. I bargained for that, before I promised my cousin to marry him. It was the one possession I could n't consent to give up. If you will stand by me as my friend after all this that I 've told you—if you can say that, in spite of everything, I have any right to the comfort you 've given, address your next letter to Lady Denin.

"Yours gratefully, from the heart, whatever your decision may be. B. D."

## CHAPTER XI

IF he would "stand by her, as her friend"?

Denin could not wait to write. He cabled recklessly. "You have done no wrong. Take all the comfort you need. What you suffer is not punishment. It is martyrdom."

"God help her!" he prayed. "And let me help her, too—my Barbara!"

He thought of the girl yearningly, as of a tortured child with the heart of a woman. His pain was peace compared to hers; and it was he—the blind man he called "clear-seeing"—who had thrown her to the wolves. If he had not been too blind to see her love, he would have shown his for her as he had not dared to show it, that day in the old garden. Their marriage would have been a real marriage, binding Barbara so indissolubly to him that not to save a life could she have broken the bond. By this time, they would have been together

in their home, and not his memory but himself would follow her through the rooms and by the dreamy lake at Gorston Old Hall. Yet even so, could he ever have known the girl from tip to tip of her soul's wings, as he saw himself destined to know her now, with six thousand miles of sea and land and one man's death and another man's life between them? Would he have learned from her lips and eyes the delicate truth of an exquisite worship, as he had learned it to-day from her written tribute to a dead soldier?

"My God! She 's more mine than she could ever have been if I had n't died for her!" he heard himself think aloud. After all, life had n't been laughing behind his back, while he wrote the book for Barbara. Though Fate snatched her away from him with one hand, with the other it gave her back, irrevocably and forever. It seemed to Denin that, though nothing could bring them together in body, nothing could ever separate them in spirit.

When he wrote that same day, he assured her again, as he had assured her in his cable, that she

had a right to every one of the words of comfort he had sent. "And you have a right to lean on that unseen wall of love I told you about," he repeated. "It is close to you, and meant to lean on. There can be no disloyalty to any one in resting against it. The love that exists for you on the other side of the Great Sea is too vast to be selfish. It asks nothing from you that you ought not to give. It only begs you to be happy, for there 's a kind of happiness without which we fall out of tune with the universe. Don't say you can have no happiness of any kind. Don't think it, or that it would it would be 'wrong' or light-minded to be happy if you could. You have seen life draped in black. But black is a concentration of all colors. No opal has such lights as a black opal. The great adventure of life is learning the terror and the beauty and the splendor of it all as one and inseparable.

"I have to confess that I 'm no guide for you or any other. I am just groping my way up, out of my own dark places; but I believe that great secrets reveal themselves in flashes, just as—in some mys-

terious, inspired moments—a sunrise or a sunset tells you the truth of a thing you 've been groping for years to find out. This obligation to your own soul (and Heaven knows how many others), the obligation of *happiness*—is one secret which has been opened for me by a magic key. That key is my strong wish to be of use to you. It helps me to feel that I may help you. Perhaps you 'll care to know that? And you can help me, and yourself, and the man who has passed on, by trying to gain the kind of happiness I speak of. It 's the kind that makes you one with the sunlight, a true note in the great music, ringing in tune with the universe.

"I wonder if you happen to remember about the music which the man in my book (the man who was passing) heard over the battlefield, the music of life for which the music of war and death was only the bass, the necessary undertone? I caught just a few snatches of that life music, but once heard it goes on echoing in the ears, teaching you the harmony of all things, if you listen deeply enough. Those young soldiers I tried to write about, who had thrown

off their bodies, and even their enmities, with the rags and dirt and blood they left on the battlefield —they were listening to the great music, and hearing in it the call to some special mission which only they were fitted to fulfil, going to it in the summer of their youth, before they had grown tired of anything. I do believe that was more than a dream of mine; that this torrent of splendid youth, this vast crowd of ardent souls suddenly rushed from one plane to another, has some wonderful work to do, which can be done only by souls who go out with the wine of courage on their lips. But we others, we have our mission too. We can't perform it if we make false notes in the music for the passing souls to hear. And we *shall* make false notes if we let our high vibrations drop down weakly to depression's minor tones.

"Perhaps you 'll turn away from this idea of mine. But it 's one that interests me, as you know, because you 've honored my little book by caring for it. In the dreams I had of things on the other side of sight and hearing, I thought that I saw the real

meaning of the war—the hidden cause of this landslide of civilization. I saw a whole nation scintillating with dull red vibrations of fear: fear of attack by other nations, fear of letting neighbors grow stronger than they. Then I saw the dull red glowing brighter with vibrations of anger, a furious desire to grow strong at the expense of others, and to kill and conquer at any cost. Beautiful blue vibrations of intellect, and clear green vibrations of hope and successful perseverance were lost, swallowed up by the all-pervading blood-red. I saw the heavy crimson flood spreading into and lowering the golden vibrations of other great peoples, who had not yet fallen; and in the strange dream of colors pulsing through the ether of earth and heaven, I realized the immensity of the fight; how it reached far beyond the forces we know, being in truth a battle between the light of cosmic day and the darkness of cosmic night. I saw that the danger was defeat of the golden vibrations by the red which would lower the life-force of the whole world; but something told me—some snatch of the great music which interprets

secrets—that progress is an integral, unalterable part of evolution; that evil, which is only negative good, can never conquer; and that the gold vibrations must win in the end. In the dream, that knowledge gave me rest. It seemed a pronouncement from the tribunal of the Power which causes all worlds and all beings to take form and exist by vibrations.

"That 's a long homily on my dreams and the theories I 'm clumsily founding on them. But I am trying hard myself to vibrate and resound in tune, because each vibration and each note count quite as much as individual soldiers count in war. In this time of earth stress, and after, when civilization is remaking itself in men's minds, with the loyal 'spirit of the time' we must all *think gold and blue*, the gold of the sun by which our bodies live, blue of the sky when inspirations come. You 'll believe me a 'mystic' (whatever that misused word may mean!), but I 'm only trying to see the Reality behind the Thing upon which I 've harped to you already. We are needing to know the Reality as we never needed such knowledge before.

"Be happy then, in the way that unites you with everything in heaven and on earth, all the sweet, kind children of Nature close around you, so that you may learn the different languages of flowers from their perfumes, and what the trees say in the wind. You can't feel alone in the world if the trees talk to you, and they will if you open your heart to them. You will get to know the oak language, the pine, the elm, the beech languages; and next you will learn how they and the sea and the rivers and brooks, and everything else that makes up the music of nature, give out the same message in a thousand different ways: *Be happy.* To be happy with your soul, no matter what has hurt your body and tried to spoil your life, is to be strong. Go into your garden, and walk by the lake you tell me of, and don't be afraid to call the Memory you love to walk with you there or anywhere. The one you have loved understands all, and so there could never be even a question of forgiveness."

Denin longed to add to his letter the request that she would write often; but he would not ask that of

Barbara. He must be ready to give all that she wanted, and beg for nothing in return. Perhaps if she found any small comfort in what he had written this time, she would be satisfied, and feel that nothing more was left to be said on either side. This possibility he tried to keep before his mind, and to think of even as a probability, in order to soften the blow of disappointment if he never heard again. But in his heart he knew that she would write. It seemed to him when he walked in the little garden of the Mirador, or stretched his long body on the warm grass under a big olive tree he loved, that he could hear her thoughts in the garden of Gorston Old Hall. With his ear close to the earth the message Barbara would send by and by seemed to come to him before it had left her mind and taken form on paper.

She answered his cable without waiting for the letter that followed.

"Thank you a thousand times," she said. "I have always something new to thank you for. What should I have done if your book had n't come to me,

and given me you for my friend? For a little while, I almost stopped believing in God, for life looked so cruel, not only to me but to every one—or nearly every one—I know, since the war began. Far and wide as I looked, I could find no mercy, no pity. How ungrateful I was, when all the time God was putting it into your mind to write that book, and sending your friendship to me when I needed it as one needs air to breathe!

"Do you know, you are teaching me to *think?* I feel now as if I had never really *thought* before. I just dreamed, or brooded. If *he* had lived, I should have learned from him. That is, I should, if our souls had n't gone on forever being shy of one another. When I had him with me, I was too busy loving him and being afraid that he would n't love me, to think about anything outside, though his mind had given my mind a great lift, even then. And another thing I want to tell you. Your way of thinking reminds me of him. I believe you must be a little like him—mentally, I mean. Believing this will make me trust and turn to you, as one who

knows the things I long to know. You have his name, too, 'John.' And I am going to sign my name always after this, not a mere impersonal initial.

"I am yours, oh, so gratefully, Barbara Denin.

"P.S. Strange, I did n't notice at first where your cable was dated! I suppose, like the help you send me, it seemed just to come out of space! But reading the message again, I broke open the envelope I had already sealed, to tell you what a throb of the heart I had in seeing 'Santa Barbara.' Can it be that you live at Santa Barbara? I was christened after that dear old place, because I was born there, or very near. It 's good—it 's *wonderful* to have your words come to me from *home*."

It was a direct question which she asked. Did he live at Santa Barbara? But Denin thought best not to answer it. She would forget, maybe, or would suppose that he had been staying for a short time in California. Each of his letters to her before, though posted not far from the Mirador itself, had been enclosed in an envelope to Eversedge Sibley. In all but one case, other letters to correspondents brought

the author by his book had been sent off in the wrapper with Barbara's. Denin had taken pains to settle the difficulty of writing to Gorston Old Hall in this way, in order that neither the name of the woman nor the name of the place should be remarked by Sibley. He kept this rule with the letter which followed Barbara's question, but her next broke the plan in pieces. It crossed one from him, and was written after receiving his letter about the garden.

"Dear Friend," she named him. "Before I say anything else—and I feel that there are a thousand things, each pressing forward to be said first—I must tell you what I have found out. I've learned that you are living in the house my father built for me. Of course that won't be important to you. Why should it be so? I have to remind myself over and over that I am surely just one of many women who have written to you after reading your book; one of many women you are kind to, out of the goodness of your heart, and the knowledge that's in it. Can knowledge be in a *heart?* Yes, yours is there, I think, even more than in your brain. I am nothing to

you except a poor drowning creature to whom you have held out a firm hand. But the drowning creature feels that your living in a place she knew and loved gives her a kind of personal right in you.

"I read this very morning in a London paper an extract from a New York one—an article about John Sanbourne. Perhaps you never even knew it was written? I 'm sure you gave no permission to have it done. I think you would not like the way the man wrote about you; but I felt, in reading, that he tried hard to bring his work up to a high level and make it worthy of the subject. If you realized the good it has done me to know that you cared enough for my dear little Mirador to want it for your own, and to restore it from ruin, why, you *could* not be so very angry with the newspaper man!

"That time in California, when I was a little girl, seemed a hundred years ago, or even in another state of existence, till I read the description of you in your garden—once my garden. Then that part of my life came back as if it were yesterday. I can see the big olive tree, which had been let grow as it

liked, with all sorts of flowing, dancing gestures of its branches and twisting of its trunk, the way olives grow in Italy and the south of France. I used to call it my 'silver fountain.' And under it there was always a look of moonlight, even in the brightest noon. I do hope nothing has happened to the tree? Say kind things to the silver fountain from its little friend Barbara. Write me about it, and tell me, please, if it means anything fairylike to you as it did to me. But I know it must, because of what you say about your garden. How little I thought when the letter came four days ago, that my long-ago garden and your garden of now, were one and the same!

"That letter was more than a letter. It was a saving force. Because it was so much to me, and I wanted to think it all over and over, I could n't have dared to answer at once in any case. But it came on an anniversary, August 18th, the day of his passing. I can't say or write the word 'death,' since I have begun to learn from you. It was always a dreadful word, like a bludgeon. But now it 's im-

possible. For me it has gone out of the language.

"As you walk in your little California garden of the Mirador, will it please you at all to know that you have given me back the joy of the English garden, the beautiful garden and the lake, and the sweet, old, history-haunted house which *he* left to be mine? Because you, who know so much, say that he understands and does n't even need to forgive me, I take your word. I am not afraid to walk with his memory now. I can speak to it as I should n't have had the courage to with him, when he was here in the flesh. And because of your letter, August 18th was not a terrible day. It was more like the wedding day of two spirits than the anniversary of a great grief, and one of the spirits—mine—just released from prison. Not that it can stay out of prison forever. It 's too weak, yet, to feel its freedom for long at a time. I 've had horrible hours, ever since that day. I shall have them often, I know, for the thing I have done has made daily life a torture. But at worst I can steal away by myself sometimes to read your letters over. They, and my new thoughts,

will be for me the tonic of courage; and so I can go on from day to day, not looking too far ahead, into the dark.

"If I have n't trespassed upon your time and imposed upon your great kindness too much already, will you write me little things about the Mirador and your life there? Will you, if you take photographs, send a snapshot of the wee house as it is now, and perhaps the silver fountain, to—Your grateful friend, Barbara Denin?

"P. S. You will think I am very old-fashioned and early Victorian about my postscripts, and I suppose I am, though I don't remember tacking many onto other letters, only those to you. This one is just a thought put into my head by some of the last things you said. It is about the war, and it came to me in the garden on August 18th.

"In a world war like this, with all its anguish, can it be meant for the nations, each one that suffers and strives, to develop by and by a new individuality, a great unselfish, selfless Self? Can it be that the Power behind the worlds throws this one now into

the furnace because development must come for progress' sake? When the earth was first created, every least thing that lived fought for itself, and there was no holding together in a large way, anywhere. When civilizations came, they brought no real improvement, for politics and greed divided nations against themselves as well as against each other. Is the true excuse for creation unity, with all the experience of ages to give it value? If it is so, and if each nation can attain to unity through sacrifice and heroism, won't the next thing to follow be the unity of the whole world? Can this be coming to pass, slowly yet surely, not only with our grain of sand, but with all the worlds, while the Power who created watches through the cosmic days you spoke of? It would make one's own tears of sorrow seem small, if one could believe this; and yet if we did not grudge the tears, they might count as pearls, poured into a golden cup, to brim it full of jewels worthy of God's acceptance.

"Perhaps this is n't much of a thought. But such as it is, there has been light in it for me, on dark

days. And as I owe it to you, I felt I should like to tell you about it. It is going to make me realize more than I could before, the brotherhood of all men in war time, even the ones we call the enemy. Why, I used to be stupid and unseeing as a mole! I hardly thought about common people, pasty-faced waiters and weedy under-gardeners and grocer's boys, as *men* at all. Now, out of every town and village they are marching with their faces turned to the front, brave and smiling. They are as glorious soldiers as any, and I pray for them as I would pray for my own brothers. Is that a step for me towards the great unity? I wonder—and hope.

"You see, I begin to warm myself at the fire your friendship has kindled. Each letter you write will be a fresh log piled on to feed the flame."

## CHAPTER XII

WHEN Denin wrote again he ventured to give Barbara the name that she had given him, "Dear Friend." And he enclosed photographs of the Mirador, with its flower-draped balcony, and of the "silver fountain."

"What you say about my helping you is wonderful to hear, and makes me feel like a comet stuffed with stars," he wrote. "It is a great honor for me that you care for my letters. It 's true, as you surmise, that others have written and do write to the author of 'The War Wedding,' and that is an honor too, in its way. But it 's an altogether different way. I can't explain why. I won't try to explain why the call you have sent half across the world is different from any other call. Yet I want you to believe that it is so, that I count it an immense privilege to write to you, and an immense delight to get

your answers. What you call your 'gratitude' is the highest compliment ever paid to me. In trying to study out your problems, I have solved some of my own. In advising you to be happy, I've found a certain happiness for myself; so you see that I have far more cause to be grateful to you than you could possibly have to me.

"For one thing—just a small instance—I had never taken a photograph in my life, until you asked me for snapshots of the Mirador garden. In order to make them for you myself, I learned how. Now I am deep in it. Do you remember the little room that is half underground, yet not quite a cellar? I've turned it into a dark room for developing my negatives. I was up all one night watching the birth of my first work. But I don't tell you that to bid for thanks. I did it because I was too infatuated with the work itself to think of going to bed. These things I send are crude. I am going to try to become what they call—don't they?—an 'artist photographer.' When I can give myself a medal for my achievements, I'll take some better pictures for

you, of the house and garden, and of the Mission and other places in the neighborhood of your old home if you would like to have them. Of course it interests me immensely to know that you once lived here."

The last sentence Denin added after a long moment of hesitation. It seemed brutal not to protest against that humble supposition of Barbara's that her past ownership of the Mirador would be unimportant to him. But what he burned to say was so much more, that the few conventional words he dared to dole out looked churlish in black and white. Still, he had to let them stand.

After these letters, which crossed, the woman in England and the man in California caught the habit of writing to one another oftener than before—and differently. They did not wait for something definite to answer, for their thoughts so rushed to meet each other that it seemed as if they knew by wireless what was best to say each time. Often what they said might have read commonplacely to an outsider, for now they told each other the little things

of every-day life. After her first outburst of confidence and confession, Barbara did not again for many weeks refer directly to Trevor d'Arcy. But Denin thought that he understood, and felt his veins fill full with a sudden jerk, as do those of a man electrocuted, when he read, "I am rather desperate to-day:" or, "To keep myself from going all to pieces, just now, I turned my thoughts off my own life, as you turn a tap, and sent them to your garden —my old garden of the Mirador. I strolled there with you, and you consoled me. It was evening. We were in the pergola (Father's old head gardener used to call it the 'paragolla'), and I forgot the iron grayness here that weighs down my spirit. Over you and me, as we talked, glittered my old, loved stars of California. And the pergola with its velvet drapery of leaves and flowers, and the three dark cypresses barring the sea view at one end, was like a corridor hung with illuminated tapestry 'come alive.' You can't think how real it was for a few minutes, walking there and hearing your generous words of comfort, like magic balm on a wound that

only magic balm could heal. I've decided that when things are very bad with me here, I'll try that way of escape again. I will send my thoughts to the Mirador garden, and the comfort that nobody but you—who understand so marvelously—can even be *asked* to give. Do you mind my flying to you? Will you 'pretend' too, sometimes in those starlit nights, that I have come to ask your advice and help? Will you feel as if I were actually there, and will you put the advice into words? Maybe they'll reach me so. I do believe they will. And I am needing such words more than ever lately. I can hardly wait for them to come in letters. Though I have the 'invisible wall of love' to lean against, that you told me of (and I *do* lean hard!), there is an influence which tries always to drag me away from that dear support, making it seem not to belong to me after all. There's a voice which tells me I was never really loved by the one whose memory I worship; that he asked me to marry him only because mother practically forced him to do so. This isn't an *inner* voice. It's the voice of a person

whose jealousy and cruelty I *must* forgive, or be as cruel myself. The voice says it has reason to be sure that all it tells me is true; that it 's useless for me to ask mother, because she would deny it; besides, she is too ill to be troubled or reproached about anything. You know, I have two invalids now, so I can't do much for any one outside, except send money—*his* money, to the poor and the wounded.

"The terrible voice hammers constantly on my heart, and is breaking it to pieces, in spite of your help. For even you can't help me there. How could you, when about that one thing—that principal thing of all, it seems now—you have no knowledge? You can't know whether *he* ever loved me as a man loves one woman, or whether he was simply willing to spread his generous protection round me for the future, when he was going away to risk his life. It would have been like him to do that, I have to admit in some moods. And I hate the moods, and hate the voice for putting the idea—which mercifully had n't struck me before—into my head.

I ought n't to hate the voice, because it may be that its wickedness—almost fiendish at times—is caused only by hopeless suffering. I strive to say to myself, as I think you would wish me to say, 'Could a bird who had been blinded and thrown into a cage where it never saw sunshine, do better than croak, or peck the hand that tried to feed it?'

"I need to walk with you in your garden, you see! Send me kind thoughts from there, without waiting to write. Then, if I send you questions in the same way, I shall feel that you hear and answer. I shall *listen* for the answers. Tell me, first of all, do you, as a man, think another man would ask a girl to marry him just because she was poor and without prospects, and he was going away to face death? Of course it 's true that you can't know, but what do you think? Remember, I 'm not speaking of an ordinary man, but one almost too generous and chivalrous for these days. Do you think such an one might have done that?"

Denin wrote back, "I think no man would have done that. You need have no fear that you were

married for any motive but love. A man—even such a man as you describe—must have argued that a young, attractive girl would have plenty of chances in life, at least as good as that which he could offer. She would have no need of his protection, and he would have no right to press it upon her, unless he gave all his love as well."

This assurance Denin tried to send Barbara in the way she asked, as well as by the letter which would take weeks to reach its destination. He made of his ardent thought for her a carrier pigeon with golden wings, which could travel swiftly as the light. Thus he rushed to her the answers to many questions, —questions which seemed to come to him from far off, as he walked in the garden. He could hear her voice calling, when the wind came over the sea, from the east where England lay.

Denin had bought the Mirador and begun his life there, with some echo of Ernest Dowson's words in his mind:

> Now will I take me to a place of peace:
> Forget my heart's desire,
> In solitude and prayer work out my soul's release.

But his heart's desire was with him, as it could have been nowhere else, so vividly, flamingly with him, that there could be no thought of finding peace. He no longer even wished for peace. He would not have exchanged a peace pure as the crystal stillness of a mountain lake, for the dear torture of seeing Barbara's soul laid bare. He was never in a state calm enough to analyze his feelings. He could only feel. Yet the strangeness of his position and hers swept over him sometimes, as with a hot gust from the tropics. John Denin had had to die, in order to learn that his wife adored him. The price would not have been too big, if he alone had to pay, but she was paying too. He could not take the payment all upon himself; yet he could help to make it less of a strain for her, and all his life was poured into the giving of this help. Every thought, every heart-beat was for Barbara. He lived to give himself to her, and to take what she had for him in return. With each day that passed he realized how much more they were to each other at this vast distance—these two, parted forever—than most men

and women living side by side in legal union. He knew that John Sanbourne was absolutely necessary to Barbara Denin, as she was to him; and all the incidents of their daily lives, big and small, though lived separately, drew them together when recounted, as pearls are drawn together on a lengthening string.

Now that the secret was out, and Lady Denin knew where John Sanbourne had made his home, without suspecting any hidden mystery in the coincidence, he was thankful that she had learned the truth. A barrier was down, and they seemed to gaze straight into each other's eyes, across the space where it had been. In return for his snapshots of the Mirador and its garden, Barbara sent photographs taken by herself of Gorston Old Hall. One of these showed the lake, with a bow-windowed corner of the black and white house mirrored in it—the very spot where Sir John Denin had asked Barbara Fay to be his wife. "The place I love best," she said. Though she did not say why, it thrilled him to guess. And in the same letter she sent faintly

fragrant specimens from the "Shakespeare border."

How the sweetness of the dear old-fashioned things, whose very names distilled a perfume, floated back to Denin from the garden he had given to his love!

"My husband had the border planted," Barbara explained. "Don't you think it a delicious idea? Not a single flower or herb mentioned by Shakespeare has been forgotten, and you can hardly imagine what a noble company has been brought together. Once we walked in the garden, he and I, on a moonlight night, when a breeze came up and drove the evening mists slowly, slowly along the paths and borders like a procession of spirits in silver cloaks. We played that it had driven away the ghosts of Shakespeare's people, kings and queens and knights and ladies called back to earth by the perfume—which, you say, is the voice—of those well-remembered flowers. That 's one of the memories I cherish now, when I walk past the Shakespeare borders in the moony dusk. And thanks to you—who have helped me literally *to move into my*

*dreams and live there*—I don't seem to walk alone. For a few moments then, I am neither lonely nor sad. The moonlight still drips into my heart, like water into a fountain, as it dripped on that night I remember: and my thoughts lead me along a beautiful, mysterious road that nobody else can see—a road to wonderful things I've never known, but have always longed for, such a road as certain music seems to open out before you."

The pressed leaves and petals in Barbara's letter were those of pansies, rosemary, and rue: the dark blue pansies he had once thought like her eyes at night; rosemary for the never-absent remembrance of them; rue for an ever aching regret, because of what might have been and could not be.

She asked him to tell her what he had done inside as well as outside of the Mirador since he had taken it, and how he had furnished the rooms. This was a difficult question to answer, because Denin had surrounded himself with everything she had described in her old environment: white dimity curtains, rag-woven rugs of pale, intermingled tints, the "Mission"

made chairs and tables, and copies of her old pictures on the walls. If he detailed his chosen surroundings, would not the added coincidence strike her as almost incredibly strange?

Denin ignored the request in his following letter, but Barbara repeated it in her next. "After all, it is n't possible that she should suspect the truth," he argued, and at last took what risk there was, rather than appear secretive. Not that there *was* a risk, he assured himself over and over again; yet when a letter came which must be a reply to his, the man's fingers trembled on the envelope. In a revealing flash like lightning which shows a chasm to a traveler by night, he glimpsed a hidden side of his own nature. He saw that it would be a disappointment, not a relief to him, if Barbara passed over his description of the new-born Mirador without stumbling on any vague suspicion. He realized that he must have been hoping for her to guess at the truth, and so break the thin crust of lava on that crater's brink where they both stood, gathering flowers.

"Good God, I thought I had gained a little

strength!" he said, and opened the letter quickly, though with all accustomed tenderness of touch. Then he tried to be glad, and remind himself that he had known it would be so, when he read that she wondered only, without suspecting.

"If I had n't been certain of it before," she wrote, "I should believe now that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy. It *must* indeed be that our thoughts do travel far, and impress themselves upon the thoughts of others, for it can't be a mere coincidence—as your taking the Mirador was—that you have made the place over again just as I had it. I must have gone there in a dream, and told you things in your sleep. Then you waked up, and supposed that the ideas were all your own original fancies. The strangest part is about the pictures. *I* had Rossetti's 'Annunciation' in my bedroom. I chose it myself, because of the lilies, and the little flames on the angel's feet. I chose 'La Gioconda' too, because it seemed to me that I should some day discover what made her smile so secret, yet so enchanting, just as if, could

one listen long enough, one might catch the tune in the music of a brook or river. I used to stand before the mirror of my dressing-table at the right of the big window, and practise smiling like her, but I could never manage it. I thought, if I could, when I grew up I should be able to make a man I loved fall in love with me, even if he did n't care at first. Poor child Me! I remembered that wish, when I wanted the One Man to love me, and yet was too proud and ashamed to try and make him do it.

"Downstairs I had Carpaccio's dreaming St. Ursula, with the tiny dog asleep, and the little slippers by the bedside. And you have that picture hanging almost in the same place! Yes, I must unknowingly have cast some influence upon you. That seems exquisite to me. I hope you do not mind? If you don't, I shall try again in other ways. Indeed, I shall begin at once by influencing you to do me a favor, I 've been waiting a long time to ask, and never quite found the courage to put into words. Send me a photograph of yourself. I want it very

much, to make sure that my mental picture of you is right."

It was hard to refuse the first request she had ever spoken of as a "favor." Denin was half tempted to buy the portrait of some decent-looking fellow and label it "John Sanbourne"; but only half tempted. He could not lie to Barbara, and was reduced to the excuse that he "took a bad photograph." It would be better for her to keep the friendly mental picture she had painted, rather than be disillusioned. "This sounds as if I were vain," he added, "but unfortunately I have every reason not to be."

"Either she won't care at all about not getting the photograph, or else she 'll be offended," Denin prophesied gloomily. "Time will show." And when the day to which he had looked forward for an answer burst upon him like a thunderclap, bringing no letter, he thought that time had shown. She was angry, or worse still, hurt, feeling that like Psyche with the oil-dropping lantern, she had been rebuked for curiosity. He saw himself losing her again, through this small and miserable misunder-

standing which he could not, must not, set right. A second loss would be a thousand times worse than the first, because this time her soul had belonged to his soul. Their letters, their need of each other, had circled them as if in a magic ring, or under a glass case which, transparent to invisibility, had housed them warmly together. A spiritual nausea of fear, fear of loss, turned his heart to water, so that over and over again he asked himself what to do, without having power to answer.

He remembered the old fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast, and how the Beast lay down despairingly, to die in his garden, because Beauty, who had made his life bearable, even happy, went away voluntarily and for a long time forgot her promise to come back.

The Mirador garden lost something of its old spell for Denin. A glowworm which had come to live at the end of the pergola, and evidently believed in itself as a permanent family pet, was no longer an intelligent and charming companion. He had valued it only, he saw now, because he had meant

to amuse Barbara by describing it to her, as his newest friend. On nights when letters from her had come, all the passion and romance of the world since its beginning had streamed along the sea to his eyes, by the path of the moon. But now the white light had a hard, steely radiance that dazzled his eyes.

While the link held between him and Barbara, it had been easy for Denin to feel kinship with nature, with the world and worlds beyond. His mind had traveled hand in hand with hers over the whole earth and on, on to unknown immensities, as rings from a dropped stone spread endlessly on the surface of water.

Expecting answers from Barbara, he had had an incentive to live, and had looked eagerly forward to each new day, as to opening the door of a room he had never seen before, a room full of beautiful things, made ready for him alone. Now, when day after day passed, bringing no word from her, the rooms of the House of the Future were empty.

He had advised her, when she needed counsel, to look and listen inside herself, for a voice. But

now, no such voice spoke to him, except to say, "You have been a fool. You must unconsciously have expressed yourself in some blundering way that disgusted her, broke the statue she 'd set up on a pedestal. She is 'disillusioned' indeed!"

A week dragged itself on into a fortnight after the day when Barbara's answer ought to have come. Still Denin had done nothing but wait, because it appeared to him that no explanation of his seeming ungraciousness was possible. If Barbara did not want him any more, he could not make her want him.

Had he not loved her so much, he might have thought her silence due to illness; but he was sure that he should know if she were ill. She had let him walk into the home of her soul and its secret garden of thought; she had offered him the flowers of her childhood and girlhood which no one else had ever seen; and if a blight had fallen upon her body, he was so near that he would feel the chill of it in his own blood. No, he told himself, Barbara was not ill. She had shut herself away from him, that

was all; and the very nature of his relationship with her forbade his claiming anything which she did not wish to give.

He lost all hope of hearing again, at the end of a month, yet would not let himself accuse her of injustice. Had she not a right to drop him if she chose? He had no cause for complaining. He had received from the "tankard of love" those two drafts which are said to recompense a man for the pains of a lifetime, and he could expect no more. Yet he seemed always to be listening, as if for some sound to come to him through space, or even the faint echo of a sound, like the murmur in a bell after it has ceased to chime.

One day, when five weeks lay between him and hope, a telegram was brought to the Mirador. Denin opened it indifferently, for his publisher often wired to him when a new edition of "The War Wedding" came out, or if anything of special interest happened in connection with the book. But this time the message was from England. It was unsigned, yet he knew that it was from Barbara.

She said, "My mother has been at death's door for many weeks. Now she is gone. I am writing."

"Thank God!" Denin heard himself gasp, and then was struck with remorse for his hard-heartedness. He had thanked God because Barbara had not taken herself away from him, and in the rush of joy had forgotten what it would mean for her to be without her mother.

She was alone now with Trevor d'Arcy, at Gorston Old Hall.

## CHAPTER XIII

DENIN cabled an answer to Barbara, and then began a letter to her. He was in the midst of it, when he was disturbed by a caller, a man he had never seen before. Expecting no one, the hermit of the Mirador had been writing out of doors, in the pergola, and so was caught without a chance of escape. He sprang up and stood in front of the little table on which were his paper and ink, as if to protect the letter from the touch of a stranger's eyes. But the visitor, who had caught sight of John Sanbourne through the network of leaves and flowers, appeared blissfully ignorant that he was unwelcome.

He was tall, almost as tall as Denin himself, though he looked less than his height, because of a loose stoutness which hung upon him as if his clothes were untidily padded. His large face, and the whites of his eyes, and his big teeth, were all of

much the same shade of yellow; and his hair, turning gray, had streaks of that color under the Panama hat which he did not remove.

"Good afternoon. I suppose you are Mr. Sanbourne?" he remarked, in a throaty voice, with a certain air of condescension which told that here was no author-worshiping pilgrim. "My name is Carl Pohlson Bradley."

"Ah! How do you do?" replied Denin aloofly. He wanted to go on with his letter.

"I 'm pretty well, thank you," responded the other, accepting the suggested solicitude for his health as fact, not a fiction of politeness. "I got here this morning. Staying at the Potter, of course. I been taking a look round the place."

"Ah!" said Denin again. He could not think—and did not much care to think—of anything else to say. But the large yellow face changed slightly, in surprise. "I expect you heard I was likely to come, did n't you?"

"No," said Denin. "Not to my recollection." Then more kindly, "I 'm rather a hermit. I go out

very little, and have only a few callers. I don't get much news, except what I see in the papers."

"It *was* in the papers." The tone in which Mr. Carl Pohlson Bradley gave this piece of information suggested that his prominence was international as well as physical.

"Can he be a New York reporter?" thought Denin, his heart sinking.

But the caller had pulled from a pocket of his brown tweed coat a newspaper, folded in such a way as to make conspicuous a marked paragraph in the middle column. This he handed to Denin as if it had been a visiting card.

The paper was a local one, and the very first line of the paragraph mentioned Mr. Carl Pohlson Bradley as a St. Louis millionaire. It went on to state that, having retired from business with a great fortune at the early age of fifty-nine, Mr. Bradley intended to buy an estate in California, as a winter residence for his family. Having read so far, Denin supposed that he had sufficiently informed himself, and offered to give the paper back.

Bradley, however, waved it away. "Read the rest," he advised.

Denin did so, and with a shock learned that his tall yellow visitor had become the owner of what was still known as "the old Fay place."

"This is a surprise," he said, not making any attempt to look pleased. "I did n't even know the place was for sale."

"Most places are, if the price is big enough to be tempting. When I want a thing I 'm willing to pay for it. And that brings us to my call on you, sir. I hear you 're an author, and have written a story that 's sold about a million copies or some other big figure which makes a lot of folks want to come here and see what you 're like. But that is n't what *I 'm* here for. I don't read stories. I 've called on business. I want to know how much you 'll take to sell me this bit of land you 've bought on my place?"

Denin's nerves had been on edge for the last few weeks, and he felt an unreasonable impulse of anger against the fat, self-complacent man. "I won't sell," he said. "I 'm sorry if you don't like having

so near a neighbor, but I was on the spot first."

"I don't see what that 's got to do with it," said Bradley. "To my notion, this bit walled off from my place is a regular eyesore. The Mirador, or whatever they call it, is a rotten little den anyhow, if you 'll excuse my saying so, more fit for a child's playhouse than a gentleman."

"I believe it was built for a child's playhouse," said Denin. "But it happens to suit me, though I 've never thought of dignifying it by the name of 'residence.' "

"Well, anyhow, if you like a little bungalow, you can buy a better one than this with more ground around it, without troubling yourself to move a mile," Bradley persisted. "I 'm no bargainer. As I said just now, when I want a thing I 'm willing to pay for it. I 'll tell you what I 'll do, Mr. Sanbourne. I 'll give you, for this little corner lot, as you might call it, not only twice what it 's worth, but the price of any other bungalow within reason you choose to select. And I 'll pay your moving expenses, too. Now, what do you say to that?"

"Just what I said before. I don't wish to sell."

"Say, this is a holdup!" blustered the St. Louis millionaire.

Suddenly Denin's good temper came back, with a laugh.

"So you think I 'm trying to 'hold you up' for a higher price!" he exclaimed. "I assure you I 'm not. If you offered me twenty thousand dollars I would n't accept."

"What!" gasped Mr. Bradley. "Twenty thousand dollars for this little rabbit hutch in a back yard? Good Lord, it ain't worth a thousand, at top price."

"Not to you, but it is to me. So, don't you see, it 's useless to argue further?" asked Denin, his eyes still laughing at the big man's ruffled discomfiture and surprise that such things could happen between a poor author and a millionaire.

"Argue! I did n't come here expecting to argue!" spluttered Bradley, looking like a bull stopped at full gallop by a spider web. "I came here to—to—"

"I quite understand, and I 'm sorry to be disobliging, but I 'm afraid I must," Denin cut in. "Anyhow, I need n't be inhospitable too. Will you lunch with me, Mr. Bradley? I can't offer you much, but if we 're to be neighbors—"

"Great Scott, man, I 'm staying at the Porter!" exploded Bradley, with a glance almost of horror at the little table in the pergola where writing materials had pushed aside dishes on a white cloth already laid. The look contrasted John Sanbourne's hospitality so frankly with the fare awaiting him at Santa Barbara's biggest hotel, that Denin laughed again.

"Well, then," he said, "if ever I change my mind I 'll send you word. We 'll let it stand at that."

With a reluctance pathetic in a man so large and yellow, Bradley saw himself forced for the present to swallow the humble author's dictum. His jaundiced eyes traveled over the little pink house, with its balcony shaded by pepper trees, over the garden which he had called a "corner lot," and over the simple pergola which for its owner was a "corridor

of illuminated tapestry." It seemed to Denin that the man could have burst out crying, like a spoiled child suddenly thwarted.

"I think you're da— mighty foolish!" Bradley amended, remembering the need to be conciliatory. "But I'm sure you'll think better of it. I'm sure you *will* change your mind. I only hope for your sake I won't have changed MINE when that time comes!"

On that he made a dramatic exit, with a mixture of stride and waddle suited to one who felt that he had had the last word.

When he had gone, Denin finished his letter and forgot all about Mr. Carl Pohlson Bradley. Also he forgot about luncheon. But that did not matter, for his meals were movable feasts. He had them, or did not have them, according to his mood, like the hermit he was becoming. Mr. Bradley, however, he was forced to remember at short intervals, nearly every day, while he lived through the time of waiting for the letter promised in Barbara's cable. "Changed your mind yet?" the new owner of the

"Fay place" would yell from his huge automobile, spraying dust over John Sanbourne on the white road to Santa Barbara. Or he would prowl, grumbling, on the other side of the flower-draped barrier which separated the Mirador garden from his newly acquired property. At last he sent a lawyer to his irritating neighbor with a definite offer of twenty thousand, five hundred dollars—just temptingly over the price Sanbourne had said that he would not take. But Denin answered, "The Mirador is my ewe lamb."

## CHAPTER XIV

"WHEN my mother was taken so desperately ill," Barbara wrote, "every moment had to be for her, except those I could spare now and then for the other invalid. I wanted to wire you; but to do that seemed to be conceited, as if I took your personal interest in me very much for granted. I knew you would be too kind to laugh at anything I did; but perhaps, in spite of yourself, the idea might flash through your mind, 'Poor thing, she telegraphs because she has no time to write. She must think I value her letters a lot!' This was just after you had said that you would n't send me your photograph, you may remember. But no, why *should* you remember? You will recall it now, though, when I bring it up to you again. And if you do, please don't think I was foolish and small enough to be offended or piqued. I was n't—oh, not for a moment. I was only disappointed and a little—

*let down*, if you know what I mean. I felt as if I had been taking a liberty with the best and kindest friend a girl or woman ever had, and laying myself open to be misunderstood. I felt, if I followed up that request by cabling to you that you must n't expect letters for some time, it would be another blunder. But oh, how I missed my friend!

"Two letters from you came to me, after I had been obliged to stop writing, but because I 'd been able to send none, nothing seemed right. I felt as if I had lost hold upon you. I groped for you in the darkness, but because I had dropped your hand, I was punished by not finding it again.

"Mother suffered so much that I could not wish to keep her. For two days and nights after she went, I lay in a kind of stupor. You see, I had n't slept more than an hour out of the twenty-four, for weeks, so I suppose I had to make up somehow, or break. I was hardly conscious at all, and they let me lie without rousing me up to eat or drink. But at last I waked of my own accord, out of a dream, it must have been, though I don't remember the dream.

I remember only that I thought you were calling me, though the voice sounded like *his*. Immediately after, I seemed to hear the words, 'John Sanbourne believes you 've stopped writing to him because you were vexed at his refusal of the photograph.' I started up, tingling all over with shame, for I saw that it might easily be true. I did n't go to sleep again. I asked for a telegraph form, and sent the cable to you which I know you received next day, because of the date of your answer.

"I beg of you not to take your friendship away from me. I shall need it more than ever now, if possible, because my mother is gone. I don't feel that she will come back to me in spirit, because she was unhappy here, and at the end was glad to go. She loved me, I 'm sure, but not in the way which makes one spirit indispensable to the other. I think after the war gloom of this world, and her own pain, she will want to be very quiet and peaceful for a while in beautiful surroundings, where she can feel young and gay again, and not trouble herself to remember that she was the mother of a

grown-up, sad woman down on earth. I want her spirit to be happy in its own way, so I 'm not even going to try and call her to me.

"She looked no more than seventeen in her white dress, in a white-lined coffin; and seeing her like that, so young and almost coquettishly pretty, made me realize why she had so bitterly regretted the passing of her youth, and had clung desperately to its ragged edges. I gave her a bed and a covering of her favorite flowers, though they were not those I care for most: gardenias and camellias and orchids. I associate them always with hot-houses and florists' shops, which seem to me like the slave markets of the flower world—don't they to you?

"I beg of you not to believe that I forgot, or did not keep turning in thought to my friend, in those long days and nights when I had n't time to write, or could n't risk the rustle of a sheet of paper, or the scratch of a pen. I thought of you constantly, especially in the night when I sat beside mother, not daring to stir or draw a long breath if she slept. I reviewed all the past, since August 18th, 1914, and

as if I had been an outsider, saw myself as I was before I read your book—before I wrote to you, and gained your friendship for my strong prop.

"I was a child in those days. I could n't face grief and realize that it must be borne. All the small, dear, warm, cushiony things of life as I had lived it, seemed the only ones which ought to be real. I clung to them. I wanted to shut out sorrow and hide away from it by drawing rose-colored blinds across my windows. I was a shivering creature who had been caught in a sleety rain and soaked through to the skin. I ran home out of the sleet, thinking to pull those rose-colored curtains and put on dry clothes and warm myself at the fire. But the curtains had been ripped away. There were no dry clothes, and no fire. There was no help or comfort anywhere. The world marched in an army against me. Only misery was real; in vain to writhe away from it; it was everywhere. Horror and anguish poured through me, as water pours into a leaking ship. My soul was withering in the cold. The bulwarks of my character were beaten down. Then

you came into my life. You did n't give me back my rose-colored curtains to hide the face of sorrow, but you taught me how to look into sorrow's eyes, and find beauty and wonder beyond anything I had ever known. You let me creep into a temple you had built, and learn great truths which you had found out through your own suffering. I knew you had written your book with your heart's blood, or you could n't have made my heart fill with life and beat again. You could n't have reached me where I was cowering, far, far below tear-level.

"Even when I could see by your letters that you had n't quite been able to shake off chains of depression from yourself, you had the power to release others. What a splendid power! Did you realize that you had it, when you wrote your book, I wonder?

"You showed me what to do with the strange forces I could feel blindly groping in my soul. You showed me that philosophy should n't be a brew of poppies to drown regrets, but a tonic, a stimulant. You taught me that hope must live in the heart, be-

cause hope is knowledge wrapped up in our subconsciousness, and spilling rays of light through the wrappings. You gave me the glorious advice not to waste life, which must be lived, by trying to kill Time, making him die a dull death at bedtime every night, but to run hand in hand with him—run wherever he might be going, because things worth while might be ready to happen round the very next bend of the future.

"This was the lesson I needed most, because I 'd forgotten that if there was no intimate personal joy left for me in this world, there was for others; and even I might help them to find it, by having the bright courage of my imagination, instead of the dull courage of convictions.

"You made me believe (even though I can't always live up to the belief) that when we are horribly unhappy, we 're only seeing a beautiful, bright landscape reflected gray-green, in our own little cracked and dusty mirror, distorted in its cramped frame. While Mother was ill, and other troubles pressed on me heavily, I often reminded myself of

those words of yours, in a many-times-read letter; and I tried to turn my eyes away from the poor cracked mirror, dim with the dust which I had stupidly thought was the dust of my own destiny; tried to look instead at the clear truth of things.

"In the same letter (one of those I treasure most; for I 've kept all, and always shall keep them) you gave me another thought that has done me good. You said it had only just come to you as you wrote to me. Do you remember? You were wondering if our Real Selves (the 'realities behind the Things' you 've spoken of so often) exist uninterruptedly on the Etheric Plane, to be joined there by the souls of the earthbound selves, each time they finish with their bodies. 'Imagine the soul arriving from earth, pouring its new experiences into the mind of its Real Self,' you said, 'and receiving in return memories of all it had ever lived through, learning the reason *why* of every sorrow and joy, and never quite forgetting, though it might think it had forgotten.'

"Oh, I thank you, my friend, for every mental growing pain you have given me! Instead of for-

getting what I owed you, in those weeks of silence, I realized it all more and more, and resolved to be worthier of my lessons when the strain on my new strength increased, as it is bound to do, with mother gone. I shall try, that's all I can say. I don't know how I shall win through. And I shall have more to thank you for, if you tell me that our friendship has n't been disturbed by my seeming ingratitude.

"Did you ever see those queer little dried-up Japanese flowers which seem utterly dead till you throw them into water? Then they expand and remember that they are alive. I am one of them. Don't pour off the water. I 'm afraid if you did, I might be weak enough to dry up again."

## CHAPTER XV

TO get back the jewel he had thought lost, was to be born into a new life in a new world. Denin had to tell the portrait in the redwood frame, what he felt, for he dared not tell Barbara herself. To have given her a glimpse of his heart would have been to show that its fire had not been kindled by friendship. His answer to her letter was so tame, so lifeless compared to the song of his soul, that it seemed something to laugh at—or to weep over. But there was a line he must not pass. He knew this well, and that his only happiness could be in the Mirador and in Barbara's friendly letters, as long as she cared to write. Mr. Carl Pohlson Bradley might go on bidding for the Mirador up to a million if he liked. There was no chance of his getting it! Denin was as sure of that, as he was of the shape of the world, or perhaps a little surer.

Then, one day, a thunderbolt fell in the garden. It was dropped by the postman, in the form of a letter.

Barbara wrote, "Everything is changed since I wrote you six days ago. I can't live here any longer, under the same roof with a man whose one pleasure is to torture and insult me. I have n't spoken about him to you lately. There was no need, but things grew no better between us—worse, rather, for he resented the calmness I was finding through you. It made him furious apparently, that he had no longer the same power over me as at first, to drive me away from him, crying, or shaking all over with shame and anger at the dreadful things he said. I hardly cared at all of late days, when he called me a hypocrite, or a liar, or a damned fool, or other names far worse. I paid him a visit morning and evening, or at other times if he sent for me, and went out motoring or driving with him when he felt well enough to go. He refused to move without me, and so, as the doctor ordered fresh air for him, I could n't refuse. When he was at his worst—or what I thought the worst then—I could look straight ahead,

and think of things you said, hardly bearing his abuse.

" 'This is my "bit" to do in the war days,' I reminded myself, and thought maybe my kind of fighting was almost as hard to do as the fighting in the trenches. Besides, I never lost sight of what you answered when I first told you how hard it was, living up to obligations I 'd taken on myself. You said, 'We 're all sparks of the one Great Fire, some brighter than others. We can't hate each other for long without finding out that it 's as bad as hating ourselves.' Truly, I quite brought myself to stop hating him. I only pitied, and tried to help, as much as he would let me. But I see now that it was all in vain. I can't do him any good by staying, and—well, I just simply can't bear it! He is too ill to be moved. This dear old house will have to be his home while he drags on his death in life—which may mean years. So I, not he, must go.

"Lest you should blame me too much, I will tell you what happened, though I was n't sure I would do so when I began to write.

"His valet is a trained nurse, a repellent person, though competent, with dull eyes and a face which looks as if it had petrified under his skin, because his soul—if any—belongs to the Stone Age. The creature's name happens to be Stone, too; and if he has any feeling it is love of money. His master has been bribing him, it seems, to spy upon me. While I was away from the house, at my mother's funeral, Stone was searching the drawers of my desk in the octagon study I 've told you about, where I like to sit because it was my dearest one's favorite room.

"I had never thought of hiding your letters. There was nothing in them which needed to be hidden. Besides, it never occurred to me that cruel suspicions and disgusting ideas of baseness were wriggling round me, like little snakes that peep out from between the rough stones in a ruined wall. There they all were, bound together in a packet, the kind, brave letters that have been my salvation! Stone took them to his master, who sent for me when I came home after the funeral.

"As soon as I saw him, I knew that something un-

usual had happened. He flung his 'discovery' of the letters into my face. He told me that he had burnt all but a few which he would keep to 'use' against me, and tried to frighten me into promising never to write to 'this John Sanbourne' again. Of course I gave no promise. Instead, I told him that what he had done and said freed me from him forever. Then I went out of the room and left him there, helpless on his sofa. For the first time I felt no pity for him whatever—not so much as I should feel for a crushed wasp who had stung me. I have n't seen him since. I don't intend to see him again. But when I could get my thoughts in order after the fire of fury had cooled a little, I wrote to him. I said that I was sending for a lawyer, and would make some arrangement so that he should want for nothing. I told him that he might stay at Gorston Old Hall as long as he wished, but that I was going away almost immediately. Once gone, I should never return while he was in the house. I have always thought divorce very dreadful; but now I see how one's point of view changes when one's

own interest is at stake. If I could, I would divorce this man, with whom my marriage has been a tragic farce. But I have no case against him legally. I knew when I consented to call myself his wife, that I should never be his wife really, and so, my solicitor says, I could not even sue for nullity of marriage. It was n't I who thought of that. I don't remember having heard the term mentioned, though perhaps I have, without noticing, when such things seemed as far from my life as the earth from Mars. It was the lawyer who brought up the subject, but added the instant after, that nothing could be done, in the way of legal separation of any kind. He advised me to send the man away from Gorston Old Hall, saying that I should be more than justified. But I would n't agree to do that. For one thing, it would be like physical cruelty to a wounded animal. For another thing—even a stronger reason—the *temptation* to send him away was—and is—terribly strong.

"I could feel myself trying to justify the idea to my own soul, as if I were pleading a case before

a tribunal. I could hear myself argue that it was unfair to let such a man enjoy the home of my Dearest, whom he had already superseded too long. But I knew, deep within myself, that my Dearest would be the very one of all others to say, 'Let him stay on,' if he could come back and speak to us. In that same deep down, hidden place, was the knowledge of my real reason for wanting the man to go. To move him might easily break off the thread of his life. *That* was the temptation: to do a thing which might seem just to every one who heard the circumstances, and to get rid of the intolerable burden—to be absolutely free of it as I could be in no other way.

"Of my own self, I 'm afraid I could n't have resisted the temptation. I should probably have thrown all responsibility on my solicitor, and let him settle everything as he thought best. The strength to resist has come through you, and what you have taught me. So it is that this man who has insulted you, and burned your letters, owes his comforts and perhaps his life itself, to you.

"There are many things which it is hard to forgive him, but I think the hardest of all is the loss of the letters. To lose them is like losing my talisman. But the ones he was keeping as a threat, I shall have again. The solicitor says he will force the man to give them up.

"Now that my leaving this dear house is settled, the next question is, What shall I do with my life, since my services as an untrained nurse are no longer pledged here? Already, though only a few days have passed, I 've decided how to answer that question. I shall go into some hospital as a probationer, and as soon as I am qualified, I shall offer my services to the Red Cross. That may be sooner than with most amateurs, for already I 've learned almost as much about nursing as hospital training of a year could have taught me. Wherever I 'm sent, I 'm willing to go. But before I take up this new work, I have a plan to carry out. Oh, how I wonder what you will say to it!

"Only a few weeks before she went out of the world, a cousin of my father's left Mother some

property in California, quite valuable property, near Bakersfield. I don't know if you have ever been there, but of course you 've heard that it is a great oil country. There are big wells on this property. If it had come to Mother earlier, she would have been overjoyed, because it would have made all the difference between skimping poverty and comparative riches. It came too late for her, and for me it is n't very important, so far as the money is concerned. There 's another thing that makes it important, though. The place is in California! It seems like mending a link in a broken chain, to own land in dear California again.

"Mother always said she would hate to go back, but I never felt like that. Now, it seems to be rather necessary for me to go—or to send some one, to look into things which concern the property. We hear there has been mismanagement—perhaps dishonesty. Of course I know nothing about business myself, and should be of no use. But if I went to California, I would engage some good lawyer on the spot, to take care of my interests: and, *I could meet*

*you*, my friend. That is, I could if you were willing. Would you be? Would you welcome me if I came one day to the gate of the little garden, and begged, 'Dear Hermit of the Mirador, will you give a poor tired traveler lunch in your pergola?'

"You see now that the legacy is only an excuse. I confess it. I should n't go to California just to straighten out things at the oil fields—no, not even if I lost the property by not going. But to see my friend who has given me back life, and love in the sweetness of memory and hope of future usefulness, I would travel with joy across the whole world instead of half.

"I know you refused to send your photograph, because I 'might be disillusioned.' But I *could n't* be disillusioned, because there 's no illusion. Do I care what your looks may be? If you are ugly, I 'm sure it 's a beautiful, brave ugliness. Anyhow, *I* should think it so. Please, therefore, don't put me off for any such reason as you gave about the photograph. It is n't really worthy of you, or even of me. Let us dare to be frank with each other. I 've

told you how much I want to see you and what it would mean to me. In return you must tell me whether you want me to come, or whether, because of some *real* reason (which you may or may not choose to explain) you wish me to stay away.

"When you get this, there will be only time to telegraph to—Yours ever in unbreakable friendship, Barbara Denin."

# PART III
# BEYOND THE MILESTONES

## CHAPTER XVI

THERE was a great wind wailing over the sea, on the day that Barbara's letter was brought to Denin. The wind seemed to come from the four corners of the earth, laden with all the stormy sorrow of the world since men and women first loved and lost each other. The voice was old as death and young as life, and the heartbreak of unending processions of lovers was the message it brought to the Mirador garden. Denin knew because he had heard through the fire-music of life, that there was another voice and another message for those who would listen. He knew that higher than tragedy rang the notes of endless triumph; that the message of love went on forever beyond the break of the note of loss. He knew the lesson he had so hardly taught himself and Barbara: that happiness is stronger than sorrow, as all things positive are stronger than all negative things. But

the big truths of the universe were too big for him that day. The thought that he might see Barbara, and yet must not see her, shut out all the rest.

There had been, it seemed, only one honorable course open when he had decided to sacrifice his place in life to save Barbara from scandal and to let her keep her happiness. It was very different now. Her marriage with Trevor d'Arcy had not been a marriage of love. It had been worse than a failure. She had loved only one man, John Denin. Why not let her come and find him?

But no, the trial would be too great. It would not be fair to put the girl, still almost a child, to such a test. Her love for Denin had been a delicate poem. He had died, and his memory was cherished in her heart, as a rose of romance. There was no human passion in such a gentle love, and only the strongest passion could pass through the ordeal he proposed. She might hate him for his long silence, and blame him for deceit. She would see herself disgraced in the eyes of the world, and nothing that he could give would repay her for all that she must

lose. No love could be expected to stand such a test, much less the love of a child for an ideal which had never, in truth, existed. It would break her heart to fail, and break his to have her fail. The memory of a meeting and a parting would be for him a second death—death by torture. The temptation to let things take their course was overcome. Indeed, he no longer felt it as a temptation; nevertheless he suffered.

Some reason for putting her off must be alleged, but there was time to think of that afterwards, between the telegram and letter which would follow. The great thing was to prevent her from coming to the Mirador, and finding out what a tragic tangle she had made of her life.

When he had sent the cable, and was at home again, Denin read once more all of Barbara's closely written pages. At the end he kissed the dear name with a kiss of mingled passion and renunciation.

"She 'll think I have no more heart than a stone," he said to himself. "Her friendship for Sanbourne

will crumble to pieces." Ineffably he longed to keep it—all that he had in life of sunshine. Yet he could not see how to account for his refusal without lying, and without appearing in her eyes cold as a block of marble. He looked at the letter—which might be her last—as a man might look at a beloved face about to be hidden in a coffin: and suddenly the date sprang to his eyes.

For all his reading and re-reading he had not noticed it before. There had been a delay. The letter had been several days longer than usual in reaching him. What if she had grown tired of awaiting the asked-for cable, and had chosen to take silence for consent?

The certainty that this was so seized upon Denin. He was suddenly as sure that Barbara was on the way to him, as if he had just heard the news of her starting. If, honestly and at the bottom of his heart he wanted to save her a tragic awakening from dreams, he must leave nothing to chance. He must be up and doing. It was not impossible, even if she had waited four days for a cable, and started im-

pulsively off on the fifth, that she might walk in at the gate of the Mirador garden, a week from that night, so Denin hastily calculated. How was he to be gone before she came—if she did come—without humiliating the dear visitor by seeming deliberately to avoid her? How could John Sanbourne's absence be accounted for in some reasonable and impersonal way, if Lady Denin arrived at Santa Barbara enquiring for him?

In his need of a pretext, he recalled the offer which he had laughed at; Carl Pohlson Bradley's offer to buy the Mirador in its garden. The man would snap at the chance to get his way so soon. In a few days the business could be settled, and Sanbourne could be gone. But where? And Denin sought anxiously to provide the "good reason" at which he had hinted to Barbara, in his cable forbidding her to come.

Even if he had sold the Mirador before receiving his friend's letter, he might have waited to see her. He could have stayed on in a hotel, if the new owner of the place had been impatient. No, selling

his house was but one step of the journey. What should the next one be?

Almost instantly the solution of the whole difficulty presented itself to his mind. A few days before, he had sent a subscription to a fund for organizing a relief expedition to Serbia. The appeal had come to John Sanbourne through his publisher. And even as he wrote his check, he had thought, if it were not for the exquisite bond of friendship which tied him to a fixed address—the address of the Mirador—how easy it would be to give himself as well as his money, to the cause of Serbia in distress. Not only doctors and nurses were wanted for the expedition, but men of independent means, able to act as hospital orderlies and in other ways.

Physically, Denin had not yet got back the full measure of his old strength. After all these months, he would be of no use as a fighting man. He limped after a hard walk; and often with a change of weather he suffered sharp pain, as if his old wounds were new. But he could stand a long journey, and surely he would be equal to the work of an orderly,

perhaps something better. If there were dangers to meet in Serbia, he would welcome them, whatever they might be. To die would be to adjust things as they could be adjusted in no other way. Since August 18, 1914, John Denin had had no right to live.

The more he thought of it, the wiser seemed the Serbian plan. With Bradley's money, he could do five times more for the Red Cross fund than he had hoped to do. What mattered the wrench of parting from the Mirador? The only thing that really mattered, as before, was saving Barbara from pain. She would not be hurt if she came and found him gone on such an errand as this, for it was one which could not wait. Later, she would understand even more clearly, for he would write a letter and send it to Gorston Old Hall, where some servant would have been given a forwarding address. Thus he need not quite lose his friend. She would forgive his going away, and write to him in Serbia.

Denin calculated that Barbara could not have sailed from England until at least five or six days

after sending her letter to him. Probably she would not have sailed so soon. Apparently, when writing, she had only just made up her mind that Gorston Old Hall was unbearable. There would have been many things to arrange, and business to settle with her solicitor, friends to say good-by to. She could not possibly reach Santa Barbara even if she traveled with the most unlikely haste, until the end of the week. That she should arrive on Saturday would be almost a miracle. It was Monday now, and Thursday might see him away from the place where he had dreamed of passing all his days. Now that he had thrown off the dream, he saw it a fantastic vision. As vigor of body and mind came back to him, the boundaries of the Mirador garden would soon, in any case, have become too narrow for his energies. He would have found it necessary to shoulder some useful burden, and work with the rest of the world. The hour had struck for him now, and John Sanbourne had got his marching orders, as John Denin had got them long ago.

He sent word to Bradley through his lawyer, that the Mirardor was for sale, after all. Next, he telegraphed to the leader of the Serbian Relief Expedition, in New York, and asked if there was a place for him. Because the name of John Sanbourne was known, an enthusiastic answer came back with great promptness. This stirred Denin's heart, which, despite his firm resolution, felt heavy and cold. He thought of Barbara coming to the Mirador, only to find Mr. Bradley's workmen engaged in tearing down the barrier between the big garden and the little one. But now that his course of action was decided, he supplemented his first cable to her with another. This was in case his "presentiment" were wrong, and she had not started. He told her what his "good reason" was: that he had sold the Mirador and was starting at once for Serbia. Further explanations, he added, would be given when he wrote.

Never had a letter to Lady Denin been so difficult for John Sanbourne to compose, for he could say only the things he least wished to say; and so the

result of his labor was, in the end, very short. Nevertheless, it took hours to write.

The day after the sending of the letter was largely taken up by a visit from Carl Pohlson Bradley and his man of business. Denin held the millionaire to the last price named by himself, for he intended to use the money largely for the benefit of the Serbian Red Cross. At last a contract was signed, and the check paid into John Sanbourne's bank at Santa Barbara. He had still all Wednesday and part of Thursday for packing and disposing of his treasures. The task was easy, for the treasures were few. He could "fold his tent like an Arab, and silently steal away."

Denin did not expect ever to return to Santa Barbara. Having loved the Mirador, and given it up, there was no longer anything tangible to call him back. More likely than not, death which had come close to him in France, would come closer still in Serbia. He would cast off his body like an outworn cloak, and free of it, would knock once more at the gate where, once, he had heard voices singing.

The one possession which Denin could not bear to give up, yet knew not how to take, was the portrait of Barbara which he had made, and framed in redwood. It was large, and the delicate tints of its pastels had to be carefully protected. He could not possibly include it in his slender "kit" for Serbia. At last he decided to pack frame and all with precaution, carry the case to New York, and leave it in charge of Eversedge Sibley. There would be time for a visit to Sibley before the sailing of the expedition; and Denin would make his friend promise to burn the wooden box unopened, if he died abroad.

Everything else, with the exception of some favorite books which could be slipped into his luggage, he determined to give away. Gossip about the sale of the Mirador, and Sanbourne's intended departure for Serbia, ran like quicksilver, in all directions. The acquaintances he had made—or rather acquaintances who had fastened upon him—began calling to enquire if the news were true, and their question answered itself before it was asked. The hermit of the Mirador and his faithful dumb companion, a

pipe, were surrounded with the aimless confusion of a hasty flitting. Souvenirs of John Sanbourne had their value, but he did not appear to know that. He offered his Lares and Penates recklessly, to any one who would accept. The parson's daughter, to whom—all unconsciously—he was an ideal hero, took away the pictures, copies of those the child Barbara had loved. The parson himself got a valuable contribution of books for his library. The furniture was given to a young couple who had taken a bungalow not far off, and were getting it ready with an eye to economy. Dishes and linen went the same way, excepting a cup and saucer and teapot which were clamored for with tears by an old lady for whom "The War Wedding" ranked with the Bible.

Denin had allowed no one to enter the balconied bedroom, for he had left Barbara's portrait until the last minute, and no eyes but his were to see that sacred thing. Once the picture was shut away and nailed up between layers of cotton and wood, it might be that he should never again be greeted by the dear, elusive smile. The furniture from up-

stairs he had added to the confusion of the sitting-room below, and early in the afternoon of Thursday everything had been carted away by the new owners. To strip the house while Sanbourne was still in it seemed heartless, they had protested; but he had begged them to do so. Mr. Bradley was to claim possession of the place next day.

When all those who called themselves his friends had bidden him good-by, a curious sense of peace, of pause between storms, fell upon the departing hermit of the Mirador. Because the little house was almost as empty and echoing as on the day when he had seen it first, that day lived again very clearly in Denin's mind. He had sought a refuge, and had found happiness. The spirit of Barbara had come to him in the garden, and had brought him love. That love he was taking away with him, though he had to leave behind much that was very sweet; and now the time had come to say farewell to the memories of months. In three hours the motor car was due, which Denin had ordered to take him and his luggage to the station. The most important piece

of that luggage was Barbara's portrait, and it had still to be put into its case. But he was leaving the farewell to her eyes, till the last moment, the last second even.

Meanwhile he walked in the garden, and in the jeweled green tunnel of the pergola. There, in the pergola, he had read most of Barbara's letters, and answered them. He was glad that no one was ever likely to stroll or sit in the corridor of illuminated tapestry after to-day. Carl Pohlson Bradley intended to have the pergola pulled down, and the whole place torn to pieces in order to carry out the grandiose scheme of a "garden architect" whom he had employed.

After the arrival of Barbara's first letter, and the one in which she confessed her love for the dead John Denin, his sweetest association with the pergola was the companionship of a little child—only a dream child, but more real, it seemed, than any living child could be. It was the child-Barbara who had walked day after day, hand in hand with him in the pergola. She had welcomed him to the Mirador when he had

come as its owner; but after a certain letter from England, she had changed in a peculiarly thrilling way. The letter was among the first half dozen; but in the growing packet, Denin kept it near the top. It was one of those which he re-read oftenest. In it Barbara had said to her friend, John Sanbourne, "If my dear love had lived, to make me his wife, perhaps by this time we should have had a baby with us. I think often of that little baby that might have been—so often, that I have made it seem real. It is a great comfort to me. I can almost believe that its *soul* really does exist, and that it comes to console me because its warm little body can never be held in my arms. I see the tiny face, and the great eyes. They are dark gray, like its father's. And when mine fill with tears, it lays little fingers on them, fingers cool and light as rose petals. Oh, it *must* exist, this baby soul, for it is so loving, and it has such strong individuality of its own! I could n't spare it now. Already, since it first came and said, 'I am the child who ought to be yours and his,' it seems to have grown. It is the *realest* thing!

Its hair is darker and longer and curlier than it used to be. Perhaps this baby will always stay with me, and I shall see it grow into boyhood, then, at last, into manhood. It 's wonderful to have this dream-baby! Tell me, have you ever had one? I know you are alone in life, for you have said so. But the more alone in life one was, the dearer a dream-baby might be."

After that letter, which pierced Denin's heart and then poured balm into the wound, the child-Barbara who haunted the Mirador had changed for him, except in name; or rather another child-Barbara had come, not a child of ten or twelve, but a baby thing with smoke-blue eyes and little satin rings of ruddy hair. The elder Barbara did not go away, but loved the baby as he did, helping him teach it how to walk, and talk, and think.

He wrote to Lady Denin after that letter of hers: "Yes, I too have a dream-child, but mine is a little girl. I hardly know how I got on without her before she came."

"Thank Heaven for memory!" he said to him-

self now, as he took his last look at the tunnel of greenery starred with passion-flowers. "After all, does it so much matter whether we had a beloved thing one minute ago, or ten years ago, if it lives always in our hearts? Each tick of the watch turns the present into the past. But in our hearts there is no past."

So he bade good-by to the pergola, and the garden he had made out of a tangled wilderness. Then he turned towards the house; for in the house he had to take leave of the portrait.

## CHAPTER XVII

"I'LL get out here, please!" said a woman in black, stopping the automobile which had brought her from the railway station within sight of the Fay place. She was tall and slender, and apparently young, but her mourning veil was so thick that it lay like drifting coal-smoke between her face and the curious stare of the chauffeur.

"It 's a querter of a mile to the gate yet. And I shan't charge any more to take you right to it," he explained.

"I know—thank you!" his passenger said. "But I want to walk the rest of the way."

She had a pretty way of speaking, though rather a foreign sort of accent, he thought. Perhaps it was English. Her luggage had been left at the station, so she was free to do as she pleased, if it amused her to spoil her shoes with the white dust of the road.

She paid the price agreed upon, and a dollar over, which the chauffeur acknowledged with a "Thank you, miss!" As he turned and drove away, however, he wondered if he ought to have called her "miss." To be sure, she had the air of a girl; but her manner was grave. He did n't know one sort of mourning from another; but being a foreigner like as not she was one of them war widows over there.

The tall young woman walked fast at first, as if she were in a hurry. Through the dark fog of her veil she looked at everything, gazing at each tree as if she recognized it, and at each flowering creeper that flooded the wall of the "Fay place" with color. She passed the main gateway, and went on without hesitation; but as she came near the small gate of the Mirador garden, her pace slackened. She moved very slowly; then fast again; and just outside the gate she stopped, the bosom of her black dress rising and falling as if she were out of breath. It was as though she were afraid to go in at the gate. But after a minute of breathing hard she

recovered herself, and opened it, almost noiselessly.

The path on the other side was arched over with pepper trees. The woman in black closed the gate and latched it very gently, almost tenderly. A few berries, like beads of pink coral from a child's necklace, lay on the old gold of the path. She tiptoed along to avoid treading on them. Presently the path was interrupted by a short flight of old brick steps, and at the top it went on again. In a moment the little pink house was in sight, backed by a great jade-green olive tree, touched with silver in the slanting light of afternoon. The garden was a lovely riot of flowers. It looked sweet and welcoming, with an old-fashioned welcome, but no one was there.

The woman's heart beat, then missed a beat. She threw back her veil, and her face shone out white and beautiful as the moon shines suddenly through a torn black cloud. It was the face of a girl, but the eyes were the eyes of a woman. They wandered over the garden, then focussed on the house. The open windows were curtainless. There were

no chairs under the balcony which gave a shady roof to the front door. Instead, a few odds and ends of broken crockery and disorderly wisps of straw lay scattered here and there. Despite the welcoming charm of the garden, there was an air of desolation about the place, which struck at the woman's heart. Hesitating no longer, she walked quickly up the path, and paused only at the open door of the little pink house.

Even there she stopped only for a few seconds. The room inside was stripped of furniture. There was no need to knock. The woman walked in and looked through the door of the "parlor" into the kitchen where a child had once cooked dinners for her dolls. It also was empty.

"Gone!" The word dropped from her lips. She did not know that she had spoken until a whispering echo of emptiness answered. Suddenly she realized that she was very tired, more tired than she had ever been in her life before. She seemed to have come to the end of the world, and to have found nothing there but a stone wall.

"Oh!" she said, and covered her face with her hands, shivering, though the sun outside the deserted house was warm. When her hands fell, there were no tears in her eyes, but they were like blind eyes yearning for sight.

It seemed to her that the house was trying to tell the secret of what had happened. Stripped as it was, she had the impression that it was full of intelligence and kindness. She listened at the foot of the stairs. Perhaps the owner of the house had not really gone yet. Perhaps he was up there. Perhaps for some reason he had to leave this place, but was waiting for Some One he expected. Surely that must be so! Surely he would not go away, just at this time?

When she had listened, and heard nothing, she called his name, softly at first, then more loudly. But there was no answer. If he were in the room above, he must have heard. Oh, the poor little room with the balcony, where a child had looked out over the garden, and played that fairies lived in the olive trees!

The girl was slightly made and light of foot, but she went up the steep steps heavily, like a weary woman who feels herself old, very old. The door of the balconied bedroom was shut. Maybe, after all, he might not have heard her call! She knocked, once, twice, then turned the knob and timidly pushed open the door. She could see nothing inside the room but a packing-case, with a wooden cover propped against it, and a box of bright new nails beside it on the bare, tiled floor.

The intruder stepped over the threshold, and saw that, at the further end of the room out of sight from the door, stood a small leather portmanteau—pathetically small, somehow—and a still smaller suitcase. He had not gone, then!—and she had no right to be here, in his room. She turned hastily to go out, and facing the door—blown partly shut by the breeze from an open window, she also faced a portrait framed in a wonderful frame of ruddy, rippled wood, like the auburn hair of a woman. The eyes of the portrait—smoke-blue eyes—looked straight into hers. And as she looked back into them, it was

like seeing herself in a mirror, a mysterious mirror which refused to reflect her mourning clothes, and gave her instead a white dress.

This was so strange a thing, that the girl could not believe she really saw it. She thought that she must be asleep in the train, on the way to Santa Barbara, and that in her eager impatience she had dreamed ahead. This would explain the deserted house. She was only dreaming that she had walked up the garden path, and had found her friend gone—gone to avoid her. How *like* a dream!—the strain to succeed, and then failure and vague disappointment wherever one turned! How like a dream that her portrait should be found hanging in a marvelous frame, in the house of a man who had never seen her, never even had her description! She would wake up presently, of course, and find herself shaking about in the train. How glad, how glad she must be that this was a dream, because when she did indeed come to the Mirador, there would be curtains and furniture and pictures and books, such as John Sanbourne had written about, and John

Sanbourne himself would be there expecting her! Still, it was astonishing that the dream went on and on being so vivid. She could not wake up!

As she stared at the eyes of the portrait, hypnotized by them, a stronger breeze slammed the door shut. Now she would surely wake! Noises always waked one. They had no place in dreams. But no. The scene remained the same, except that the handle of the door was being slowly turned. Some one was opening it from the outside. The dream was to go on, to another phase. The girl clasped her hands, and pressed them against her breast. So she stood when the door opened wide, and a man, stopped by the sight of her, stepped back in crossing the threshold.

"Barbara!"

The name sprang to Denin's lips, but he did not utter it.

He had meant to go away in time. He had tried to spare her this; yet he had in his secret heart thought that, if she did come, it would be heaven to see her. But now it was not so. There was one

brief flash of joy in her beauty; then horror of himself overpowered it. Her very loveliness seemed to make his guilt more hateful—a lifetime of guilt! He saw himself as the murderer of this girl's youth and happiness. It seemed to him that no man had ever sinned as he had sinned. He had crept away and hidden in the dark when she most needed him. Defenseless, she had in all good faith married another man. And because of his weakness she had sinned against the law. She had done a thing which, if known, would ruin her life in the world she knew. It was his fault, not hers, yet she had suffered for it, and now she would suffer more than she had suffered yet. If she had thought she loved the dead man, from this moment she would hate the living one, who had deceived her.

Yet there was one hope. Perhaps he was even more changed than he had supposed, and if he went away instantly without speaking, she might not recognize him. He stepped back, on the impulse, but she held out her hands, as he turned to go, and cried to him piteously.

"Oh, if you are a dream," she said, in a low, strange voice, "stay! I beg of you to stay."

Still he did not speak. He could not, now. He waited.

"It 's all a dream," she whispered. "I know that. Coming here—to the empty house—finding my own picture—and then—then—when I looked for John Sanbourne, seeing you—my love! O God, let me never wake up in this world. If this could only be —what they call death!"

The word broke, to a sob, and she swayed towards him, deathly white. Denin sprang forward, and caught her in his arms—his wife—the first time he had ever held her so. Then, because he could think no longer, but only feel, he kissed her on hair and eyes and lips, and strained her to him with every worshiping name he had given her in his heart since their wedding and parting day.

She lay so still against him, that it seemed she must have fainted; but her eyes opened, drowned in his, as he kissed her on the lips. He saw the blue glitter, as if two sapphires blocked his vision, and

suddenly his face was wet with Barbara's tears. "Have I died?" she whispered. And the tears which were damp on his face were salt on his lips as he whispered back, "No."

He remembered how he, too, had once thought himself dead, and then had crept slowly back to life. He had seen Barbara then, as in a dream within a dream. Now she, too, was passing through this experience. He held her tight. He could not let her suffer as he had suffered when he came back to life! Yet what could he do for her, after all? The sense of his helplessness was heavy upon him.

"Forgive me," he said, "Barbara, darling! I never meant this to happen. The first I heard of you—after—was that you 'd married—your cousin. I believed you loved him. I was in a German hospital—broken to pieces—disfigured. I ought to have died, but somehow I could n't die. I had to live on. Later, I escaped. I came here—where *you* had lived. God knows, all through I tried to do for the best—your best. Nothing else mattered. I wrote that book—for you, only for you! And you know

the rest. You turned my hell to heaven. I was—almost happy, except for what you suffered. But I dared not have you come here. I cabled. I was going away—"

She pressed her head back against his shoulder, and looked up at him. "You were going—" The words burst from her on a high note of sharp reproach, but she caught them back with a sigh of joy. "You didn't go!" she breathed. "God wouldn't have let you go. He put it in my heart to leave England the day after I wrote. Ah, we're not dreaming, and we're not dead! We're alive, and we love each other better than all the world. I know now that you do love me, or you couldn't hold me and kiss me so. You couldn't have made such a sacrifice—the sacrifice of your very life and self for me. It was like you—like you! The mistake was my fault, not yours. But I'll make up to you for it all, and you will make up to me. We'll never part for an hour again."

"You don't know what you're saying, Barbara," he reminded her. "John Denin's dead. We can't

bring him back to life. Too many interests are involved, yours first of all, but others, too. It would be selfish and cruel for me to take you so—"

"You don't take me," she said. "I give myself, I give myself to John Sanbourne, as I gave myself to John Denin."

"But we 'll be poor," he told her. "John Denin's money can't come to us—"

"I have enough of my own now. And if I had n't, I 'd beg with you. We could be tramps together."

Denin laughed out joyously, almost roughly, and clasped her tight. "It won't come to that, my darling! Perhaps I can write another book. Yes, I can! It shall be called 'The Honeymoon.' "

"Let us go away somewhere," Barbara implored, "where nobody will know us, and we can love each other in peace till we die: for we belong to one another in God's sight and our own. Yes, till we die. And afterwards—afterwards! Oh, you have taught me that!"

"I have pledged myself to go to Serbia," Denin said.

"Then I 'll go to Serbia with you, that 's all! What does it matter where?"

"And the world—and Gorston Old Hall?" he heard himself asking.

"Neither do they matter. Nothing matters but you. And God will understand—because I am *your* wife, and belong to no one else, or ever, ever did."

"You are right," Denin answered, holding her very close. "God will understand. You 're mine, and I 'm yours, and nothing shall part us again."

The portrait with the smoke-blue eyes smiled at them from the door. They saw only each other: but the eyes in the picture Denin had painted seemed to see beyond the place where the milestones end.

THE END

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